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ABSTRACT

This collection of 17 papers, presented at a conference in May 1996, documents some of the current thinking about adult literacy education in Great Britain. The first of the three sections of the papers, "Some Context," contains two analyses of the political and economic realities within which potential participants in adult literacy and language education negotiate their opportunities for learning: "Basic Education in the Post-Industrial World: Jobs, Gender, and Citizenship" (Sue Gardener), and "What Refugees Bring to Literacy Classes" (Helen Sunderland). The second section, "Research Perspectives," includes five papers: "Putting the New Literacies into Practice" (David Barton, Mary Hamilton); "Photography in Collaborative Research: 'Insider'/'Outsider' Images and Understandings of Multilingual Literacy Practices" (Rachel Hodge, Kathryn Jones); "Making Sense of Experience: The Role of Narrative in Research and Practice" (Julia Clarke); "Self-Directed Learning: Liberating or Oppressive?: Developing Autonomy in Open Learning" (Chris O'Mahony, Wendy Moss); and "Teach the Mother to Reach the Child?" (Jacqui Armour). The third section, "Students Teaching, Teachers Learning," contains 10 papers that show different strategic responses to learners' interests and address issues of theory and practice that those interests raise for teachers and their managers who seek to improve the quality of adult literacy education. The papers are as follows: "Family Learning in West Glamorgan" (Sandra Morton); "Understanding Nursery Education: A Course for Parents & Careers" (Foufou Savitsky); "ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] and Student Publishing" (Qaisra Ahmad); "The Gatehouse Asian Women's Project" (Tom Woodin); "A Pragmatic Approach to Vocational Literacy" (Audrey Stewart); "Finding a Way In: Back Door Routes to Learning" (Jo Colley); "The Politics of Workplace Literacy" (Fiona Frank, Chris Holland); "Listening and Teaching in Basic Education" (Alison Noel); "The Significance of Student Writing" (Jane Mace); and "RaPAL [Research and Practice in Adult Literacy] 1996: A Turning Point?" (Margaret Herrington). The publication includes information about the conference and the presenters. (KC)

ED 411 448

Lifelong Literacies

Papers from the 1996 conference.

Edited by Stella Fitzpatrick and Jane Mace.

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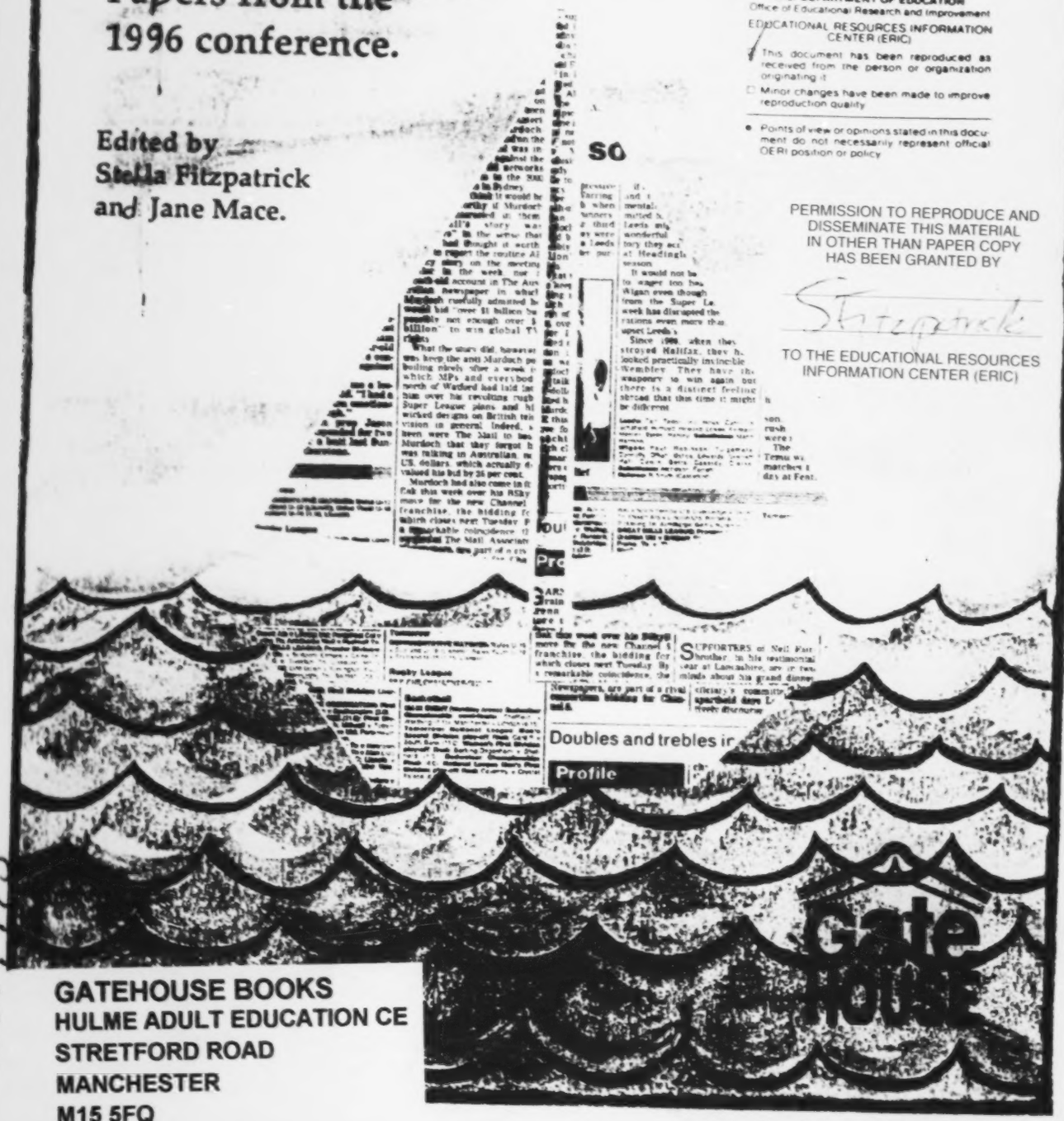

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Lifelong Literacies

Papers from the 1996 conference

Edited by Stella Fitzpatrick and Jane Mace

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of papers documents some of the thinking about adult literacy education in the UK now. The authors are teachers and researchers working in a variety of settings, sharing a common interest in literacy as something living and moving, too interesting and complicated to be simply measured, and too important to be boxed into levels and competences. All the papers were presented at or developed from discussions at a conference held in May 1996 in Manchester, called 'Lifelong Literacies'. The publication here, however, stands in its own right: and we have re-grouped the papers outside the original structure of 'conference strands' in which they had been originally arranged, because, for a reader (rather than a conference participant) we thought there would be a more effective coherence as a result.

They are grouped here, then, in three sections. We begin, in the first, SOME CONTEXT, with two analyses of the hard political and economic realities within which potential participants in adult literacy and language education are having to negotiate the current map of opportunities for their learning.

The second section, RESEARCH PERPSECTIVES, begins with another kind of map: this time, that of the work in 'new literacy studies', in which Mary Hamilton and David Barton present the ways in which research work has moved beyond old preoccupations with illiteracy to a open up a wide range of ideas about the meaning and value of literacy in everyday lives. (Like Sue Gardener's, this paper was presented at a plenary session of the conference). The four papers that follow give four different accounts of such studies. In taking photographs of everyday reading and writing, students and researchers worked together, in the first: a method of work which revealed all sorts of layers of understanding for both groups of participants. In the second, drawing on interview-based research, Julia Clarke questions the linear idea of 'progress' and suggests alternative ways to listen to narratives of experience. The third paper analyses the idea of 'autonomy' in open learning, and from portraits of learners' experiences, argues for a fuller recognition of the balance between support and independence for the learner. An analysis of media reports of family literacy programmes in the last paper reveals the gendered language at work in these representations, both of 'the family' and of literacy.

STUDENTS TEACHING, TEACHERS LEARNING has been chosen as the heading for the third section, which is also the largest. This is no coincidence. As we see it, students in adult literacy education generate the questions and issues which are central both to research and to the policy context within which provision for adult learners is funded. Each of the papers in this section - on family learning and family literacy; on student writing; on 'back door routes' and outreach; on vocational and workplace literacy; on counselling in adult basic education; and on student publishing - show different strategic responses to learners' interests, and pick out issues of theory and practice which those interests raise for teachers and their managers who seek to improve the quality of adult literacy education now.

In what often feels like a desperate scramble for resources, many adult educators get in the habit of a way of writing that plays up the positive and plays down any mistakes or doubts. This collection is not addressed to funders. In preparing the papers for this collection, we

asked all the writers to include some critical reflection, something of their own place in the work they have discussed, and some relationship between this work and other studies. So in reading these pieces, you will find shadow, as well as light: and the excitement of achievement in literacy learning which is all the richer for a recognition of the enormous personal, political, and other obstacles and the difficulties in its way. As Helen Sunderland reminds us, literacy education, to be effective, needs to take account of the external world which its participants (and all of us) live in.

Like all editors, we had to struggle with our own as well as other people's deadlines. But in this case, we were fortunate in having contributors willing to work against their own to finish and get to us amendments and corrections. It is fitting that the publisher for the collection should be Gatehouse Books: of all publishers, the one which (since 1977) has been consistently working to put into the public domain the experience of learners themselves. As a new departure in publishing, we asked contributors to provide, not disks, but final hard copies to a common format. None of us had time ourselves, or funds to pay others, to download and reprint in a single graphic style. For the inevitable variation in typeface which has resulted, we do not apologise: for this writing work, like so many other literacy practices, has been an achievement against the odds.

We have included, as appendices, some account of the conference experience: a note on the process of organising it, by Ann Finlay; the programme, a list of participants, and a postscript on its evaluation.

Stella Fitzpatrick
Jane Mace
Manchester and London, July 1996

Some context

BASIC EDUCATION IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL WORLD:
Jobs, gender and citizenship.

Sue Gardener.

Imagine:
a district of a large English city with a poor white working class population and a large Black population, both African Caribbean and bilingual South Asian, with a number of refugees from disparate places. Unemployment is average to high, very high in small pockets, as manufacturing and service jobs (transport, warehousing) have moved further out - going where the infrastructure is. There is a large FE college, successful under the new system, with a bare majority of its students over 19. It has worked thoroughly on assessing the basic skills of its students on admission, and has a positive learning support policy and practice. It also has a limited involvement with a local authority led family literacy project, which works through links between primary schools and community groups as well as engaging with individual parents. Both of these developments have drawn support and funding from central agencies.

There is a very localized cross-sector urban regeneration project approaching basic skills from a human resource perspective; a public housing estate which used Estate Action funding to investigate skills and commission training for residents; and an old-established voluntary sector literacy project which may be on the point of folding after appointing a manager who applied standardized practices insensitively. It may be re-invented through laborious networking and unpaid work. There are also some strong self-help groups sustaining community languages and offering supplementary schooling to Black teenagers.

Not all of these activities will be picked up by statistical collection from the centre, which is in any case gender blind: but from other social knowledge we can guess that the college will recruit more young men and more older, and better skilled, women; that the family literacy work will have been primarily the work of mothers; that the community projects will have a number of men with organizing experience in trade unions and formal politics and a number desperately trying to create identities after their jobs have gone, and a majority of women working doggedly at social cohesion so that they and their children can have a tolerable physical and social environment. We can guess that most of the learning identified as basic skills will be in, or moving towards, the English language.

Try looking at this picture in terms of co-existing modernist and post-modernist features, structures and characteristics. On the one hand, a set of funding systems which, although technically at arm's length from the state, set up structures and criteria of commanding authority, which then reproduce cultures of acceptance and practice which may be more rigid and uniform than the systems themselves: it must be Wordpower, it must be the BSA assessment procedure. A national agency which legitimizes some learning agendas and de-legitimizes others. A presumed correspondence, widely diffused and repeatedly re-stated, between learning achievements, economically valuable skills and national competitiveness: a presumed correspondence between the capacity of parents (mothers) to give their children a good start and all of these. A credentialling system of learning supported by national targets. Quality as a unitary concept supported by benchmarking, kitemarking and a narrowing band of recorded achievements. A presumed alliance between the state and para-state agencies and the economic project.

On the other hand, an increasing tendency to separate and specialize agents and interventions, a plurality of players, internal markets, local and topical action: flexible specialization in the education and training system. A discourse which also stresses pluralism: literacies, practices, the notion of discourse itself. A range of languages, behaviours and contexts which confirms this plurality. An uncertain relationship between economic and civic needs and projects. Signs of collapse or partial withdrawal in the major education/training systems which drive people back on unpaid work, improvisation, networking. And above all, real and sustained difficulty, both in terms of people's lives and as a consequence in terms of educational projects which might support them, in identifying the niche, in a world of niche

markets, in which many of the people whose basic skills are less effective than the average might ever earn a living. Or if they do, difficulty in seeing what the concept of skill has to do, in detail, with the niches they will find.

My argument is that we occupy and work in a space which appears to be highly regulated, centralized and organized but which is at a deep level highly disorganized. What disorganizes it is to some extent imagination and resistance, but to a greater extent the misfit between the wish to regulate and the nature of the social and economic events and patterns that we endure and contribute to. I will expand this argument a little in relation to the motif of "the post-industrial world".

The notion that skills are the key to economic success and competitiveness underlies what I have come to call the modern consensus about basic education. In its main outlines it recurs in the discourse of all the main UK political parties, and it underlies the National Training and Education Targets and the Campaign for Learning. It appears to offer a favourable climate for access to learning by people who did not get it through earlier initiatives, including many of our own in the 70s and 80s. In its application to adult literacy it received its classic expression in the CERI/OECD report of 1992, Adult Illiteracy and Economic Performance.

> "The challenge of tying literacy training to job training has become even more immediate because of accelerating change in the nature of jobs themselves. Researchers point out that literacy needs in most jobs are already quite high: several studies show that on-the-job reading materials typically range from ninth grade to twelfth grade levels, and that only a tiny percentage of jobs require no reading at all. Those workers called upon to do the most reading are workers learning new jobs who may include many with the least amount of previous job-related training. More broadly, analyses of labour market shifts suggest a growing tension between steady growth in advanced economies in jobs requiring reading and communication skills, and the tendency for larger proportions of the labour force to be drawn from groups that have on average completed fewer years of schooling, such as women, minorities, immigrants, or other disadvantaged groups." (1)

What jobs, what segments of the labour market, are they being drawn into? Will the incentive to train apply with equal force in all segments? It seems at least equally possible that labour market segmentation will have two effects that reinforce economic and social exclusion rather than healing it, and that this exclusion will be patterned along the gender and citizenship lines indicated in the last sentence of this extract. First, the unskilled workforce is increasingly not in the core of full time staff with proper employee status in whom training investment will be made. Secondly, if you accept the case that skills are polarizing, deskilled workers will not be close enough to the polity of the workplace to need its literacy.

This is not to deny that new patterns of learning can provide opportunities for some, and we know that colleagues are working imaginatively to exploit and develop those spaces - for example, the Workplace Basic Skills Network. What it does suggest is that the consensus is not to be relied on; and that since the placing of economic life in relation to civic life is undergoing such change, we need to define and work on forms of educational practice that will support the unwaged work of sustaining the social fabric, done as it is with particular energy and desperation by those who can't escape the worst stresses of the present. Workplace basic skills, core skills at the stage of labour market preparation, and family literacy - three levers of the same national economic project - will not meet all the plural learning agendas of a divided society. We must and can use the major structures, but we need to out-think them, so that we can do the other work as well.

(1) CERI/OECD 1992 p. 19

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WHAT REFUGEES BRING TO LITERACY CLASSES

Helen Sunderland

- From February 1996, The Refugee Council has seen about 100 people per week who are no longer entitled to benefits. The majority of these have found some kind of shelter with friends, but about 15 people a week have been sent away with blankets.

- In April 1996, the Refugee Council saw 30 young people aged between 16 and 19 who were refused access to College because they were no longer entitled to benefits. [1]

The attitude towards refugees in this country has become extremely ugly, and reaches previously unimagined depths in the changes to social security regulations which came into force last February and in the provisions of the Immigration and Asylum Bill, due to become law in summer 1996.

Against this background, and against the background of war, imprisonment, and/or loss that they have struggled through to arrive here, refugees in our classes are trying to move forward. But are these classes providing the support and education that refugees need? What are the issues that we need to consider when working with refugees in our language and literacy classes?

This paper will give case studies of refugees in an imaginery literacy class in London. Though I have changed their names, they are all real people, and though the class is imaginery, it is not untypical, especially in community or TEC schemes. From the case studies, I will attempt to draw out issues that the tutor needs to consider when teaching a group such as this. Finally, for those who may not have them at their fingertips, I will outline some of the facts and figures relating to refugees in this country, and draw attention to some of the worst clauses of the new Asylum Bill, in the hope that readers may then wish to lobby for changes.

1. CASE STUDIES

Xavier arrived in this country 18 months ago from Colombia, where he was a successful accountant in private practice. He left because his teenage son was beginning to be harassed by the army, and when they arrived in London his son was ill for six months with a nervous breakdown. He has three other daughters, two in their late teens and one aged 10. Initially they were put in temporary accomodation, but they have just been given a permanent flat. However, they have no money to furnish it, provide floor coverings or curtains.

[1] Information from Jill Rutter, Refugee Council

Xavier has a successful record of learning, albeit in a fairly formal system. As he was educated in Spanish to a professional level he is obviously completely literate in the Latin script. However, he is not a fluent speaker of English and he makes frequent grammatical errors which are transferred to his written English. He also has difficulty understanding the discussions in class, particularly when conducted at speed, or when they contain colloquialisms.

He comes to class because he wants to improve his English and get some kind of work, preferably in his field of accountancy. However, he is frequently absent because of trying to sort out all the practical issues in his life - for instance his daughters' schooling, his flat, his son's health. He is also trying to find out if his qualifications can be recognised here, and if not, what he needs to do to re-qualify. He is permanently worried about being sent back.

Abdi is 18 years old and comes from Somalia. He arrived in England five years ago, speaking no English at all, and was put into year 9 of secondary school. He received a little in-class support, but no withdrawal teaching. Before that he had not been to school at all, because of the civil war. His memories of school are of chaos - he claims he did not understand what was happening around him for about two years. By the time he began to understand, it was time to leave. After secondary school, he attended a Youth Training course for six months, but dropped out because he could not keep up with the reading and writing element.

He now speaks English fairly fluently, with some London English/Caribbean features. However, he has never been taught any basic literacy skills, such as how to hold his pen, or sound/letter correlation, or any strategies for reading, and learning spellings.

Anne is a teacher from Nigeria. She would like to teach here, but her qualifications are considered to be below 'A' level standards by the British Council equivalencies service. She was educated in English "back home" and cannot understand why her English is not considered good enough for her to do a B.Ed course. When asked what she thinks she needs to work on, she says "spelling". However, if she is to be successful on her B.Ed course she will need to work on using the right register or tone, writing discursive/analytic text, and being aware that she is using features of Nigerian English (such as verb tenses, vocabulary/expressions) in her writing. She is also used, when studying, to copying chunks from standard texts, and does not understand why her teacher is appalled at this.

Anne has had a successful education, of a very formal nature. She sees the teacher as an "imparter of knowledge", and wants to be told rules and how to "do it right". She believes that correction of work and the analysis of strengths and weaknesses are for the teacher rather than for her to do.

Fatma, from Kurdistan, has been in England the longest of the refugees, but has been busy looking after her 5 children. Now they are all at full-time school, she is ready to come back to improve her reading and writing. She wants to be able to help them with their studies. Her spoken English is fluent, incorporating features of London English and Kurdish.

Fatma was educated in Arabic up to the age of 14, when she left to get married. Her first language is Kurdish, which she still speaks to her children, but she cannot read or write it.

Her memories of school are fairly happy. It was a formal type of schooling, and she did not do particularly well in it, but not badly either. Having felt quite isolated in her years at home, she enjoys the company in the class and has made friends with Myrtle and with the two English women who also have children.

Ruth is a nurse from Ethiopia and has been in this country two years. She would like to continue her profession, but her qualifications are not recognised, so she has come to class to gain confidence for future studies.

Ruth is a Tigray speaker who was educated in Amharic. She was a successful student, who studied hard, passed exams, got good marks and was a quiet and respectful member of her class, never looking at the teacher or talking unless she was asked a question.

Ruth is a slow writer in English, whose script appears rather spidery, because of the difference with Amharic. She finds discussion impossible, does not want to contribute her own views, and gets impatient with the views of others. She is here to learn from the teacher. She drops out after 4 weeks, finding the class too chaotic.

Also in the class are three non refugees. **Myrtle, in her 40s, is from Jamaica,** where she had some primary schooling. As a foster mother she frequently has to fill in forms, and read documents, and has come to class to help her do this, because her daughter, who used to help her, has now moved away. Myrtle finds sorting out standard English from Jamaican Creole, and some features of London English, very difficult, and both her written and spoken language reflect this.

Finally there are **Jackie and Jean, two south Londoners.** Jackie comes because she wants to return to study, Jean because she would like to get a better job. They both hated school, where they were made to feel stupid because they were not good at reading and writing. Jean 'bunked off' for much of the time, and Jackie became the class clown, a role she still takes on when she feels threatened.

All classes have students with a mixture of skills and experiences, but, as can be seen from the case studies, the range of skills and experiences is much wider in the case of refugees. Below are some of the issues that need to be considered when working with refugees.

Knowledge of reading and writing

There may be students fluent in the Latin script, but educated in another language, such as Xavier, or educated in English but in a different variety of English with different conventions, such as Anne or Myrtle. In the same class may be students who are fluent writers in another script, such as Ruth, and not-so fluent, such as Fatma. Then there may be some, like Abdi, who was never taught the basics of reading or writing any language.

Knowledge about language
All refugees are operating in a new language. Some (like Ruth and Fatma) are operating in their third language. This will bring an awareness of how language works, and, if they have been taught their second or third language in a systematic way, will bring with it a knowledge of grammar. Xavier or Ruth, for instance, may well ask detailed questions about conditionals or past tenses that the tutor may find difficult to answer, and that would not normally be discussed in a literacy class.

Educational backgrounds
Many refugees have professional backgrounds (Xavier, Anne, Ruth). Some have had no formal schooling at all (Abdi), others may have been educated to primary or lower secondary (Fatma,).

Experience of formal learning
Unlike many local born literacy students, (such as Jackie or Jean) most refugees have had very successful educational experiences, often of a quite formal nature (for instance, Xavier, Anne, Ruth, Fatma). They may be impatient with the informal way learning is carried out in literacy classes (as is Ruth).

Attitude to the role of the teacher and learner
In many cultures, the teacher is seen as the font of all knowledge, and granted a great deal of respect (Ruth, Anne, Fatma, Myrtle). The responsibility of the learner is to obey instructions, and learn to repeat what the teacher says. In others, though more formal than in this country, the teacher is seen as facilitator or enabler (Xavier), and the learner's responsibility is to question as well as to repeat. In this country the teacher is seen by many as a fallible human being, to be challenged, where necessary, and the student has to fight for the right to learn (Jean, Jackie, Abdi).

Learning the system
For newly arrived refugees, the system has to be learnt along with the language and literacy skills. How to chose a school for his daughters (Xavier), how to get qualifications recognised (Anne, Xavier, Ruth), how to work the immigration rules ((Xavier, Ruth). This is something that those who were born here or who have been here longer can help with (Jean, Jackie, Myrtle, Fatma).

I have just begun to touch on some of the issues involved in working in literacy classes with refugees. Readers will be able to draw out many more, and add to them from their own experience. The five issues I have looked at so far are educational/literacy issues, but these need to be seen in the context of the external world that refugees have to live in. For this reason, I will go on to outline some of the external difficulties which face refugees in the new Social Security regulations and the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

2. IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

In 1995, out of 18 million refugees in the world (most of whom are given shelter in countries of the South), a total of 43,965 refugees applied for asylum in this country.

Of the 44,000 who came here, a mere 7.3% were granted what is known as full **Refugee Status**, that is, were given full recognition of their right to remain, and the same rights as local born people to education, benefits and to have their family join them in this country. Another 11.3% were given **Exceptional Leave to Remain**, which needs to be renewed on a regular basis, and brings restrictions with it. Finally 81.4% were refused asylum and faced deportation.

For those who are waiting for their decision (**Asylum Seekers**), changes in the Social Security Regulations deny benefits to any who did not apply at the airport as they arrived, or those who have had their application refused but intend to appeal. This means they receive no income support and no housing benefit. It is increasingly meaning that they also lose their right to concessionary rate further education. These measures have not been brought in entirely smoothly. They originally came into force, without going through Parliament, in February 1996. They were then declared illegal in the courts in June, and eventually reinstated in the final readings of the Asylum Bill in July.

In summer 1996, the new Asylum Bill is expected to become law. As well as denying benefits to Asylum Seekers, this will allow the Home Office to:

- penalise employers for taking on 'illegal' immigrants
- give a list of allegedly 'safe' countries to which refugees can be returned
- extend visa restrictions
- reduce the right to oral appeal
- increase removal to a 'safe' third country[2]

Readers of this article who have not already done so are urged to lobby against these inhuman measures, and to work within their educational establishments to find ways of supporting and educating refugees who have lost benefits.

The refugees who achieve asylum in this country are the strong ones. Often successful academically and professionally in their country of origin, they also need enormous emotional strengths to plan and succeed in their escape, and survive the shock of leaving their country, friends and families behind. Many have lived through war, torture, loss of loved ones or other traumas. Once in this country, most refugees face poverty, unemployment and racism. Teachers working with refugees in literacy classes need to recognise the complexity of this work. They need to be aware of the wide range of refugees' educational experience, as well as the social and political context in which refugees have to live today in Britain.

[2]Information from Asylum Rights Campaign

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July 1996.

Research perspectives

PUTTING THE NEW LITERACY STUDIES IN TO PRACTICE

David Barton and Mary Hamilton

This paper falls into four parts:

1. What do we mean by the New Literacy Studies?
2. What do we mean by "putting in to practice"?
3. Why theorising literacy is important
4. Some examples of putting the new literacy studies into practice

1. What do we mean by the New Literacy Studies?

Our main argument is that there have been some major shifts in how people think about reading and writing. These shifts have been happening gradually and unevenly in different parts of the educational system and in social enquiry but their shape has become clearer over the last few years. They have started to get wider acceptance and can now be named as a coherent approach to literacy. They are gradually becoming a more dominant view, but one that is still disputed and contested by more traditional approaches to understanding literacy.

These developments have not been straightforward: there have been differences between people working in different settings, with different interests in promoting literacy. The new view of literacy that is emerging does not sit easily with some of the aims and assumptions that underpin current educational policy and that frame media reports about literacy.

The ideas have come from many sources and disciplines within academic circles. They have also come from practice where they have informed some people's work for a long time, particularly those who have been concerned to challenge what they see as old and damaging assumptions about literacy and to formulate alternatives.

The area is becoming known as New Literacy or New Literacy Studies. These shifts have led to a broader understanding of what is included when we talk about literacy. They make us look beyond texts themselves to what people do with literacy, with whom, where, and how - that is, they focus attention on the ways in which texts are socially regulated and used. They lead us to consider not just print but other mass media including visual and oral ways of communicating (see Kress and Van Leeuven, 1996) and how the use of these media is interlinked. In the New Literacy Studies, writing becomes as central as reading.

The focus shifts to what people can do, rather than what people cannot do, getting away from an obsessive interest in *illiteracy*. This approach involves us in looking beyond educational settings to vernacular practices and informal learning, and to the

other official settings in which literacies play a key role. Learning does not just take place in classrooms; learning is not just concerned with methods. (For more details of the New Literacy Studies, see Barton, 1994.)

Taken together, we would argue that these developments represent a significant change of perspective on literacy, **a basic paradigm shift** in our understanding of reading and writing. The shift is from a psychological or cognitive model of a set of skills to one which includes the practices associated with reading and writing. It is a social view of literacy rather than a purely psychological one. It has to be historically and socially situated. As Brian Street puts it, it is a shift from literacy as an autonomous gift to be given to people to an ideological understanding of literacy, placing it in its bigger context of institutional purposes and power relationships (see Street, 1984).

This shift has implications for how we work with literacy. Firstly, we have to recognise that there is not one literacy, but there are many different literacies. What does this mean? As soon as you move away from seeing literacy as simply a set of skills to viewing it as practices that people are actively involved in, it becomes obvious that there are many different ways in which reading and writing are used and that people are developing new literacies all the time. In his book "The Social Mind" Jim Gee talks about how literacies are linked to different discourse communities that we are all part of (Gee, 1992). These are made up of people, things, characteristic ways of talking, acting, thinking, believing, valuing, interpreting - and reading and writing are an integral part of these activities and ways of being in the world. Often, we are not very aware of the rules of the communities we are part of, but we become sharply aware of them when we move into a new group or institution that assumes a different set of rules. All of a sudden we feel like novices.

There is another implication of the shift in understanding literacy. Because there is no one standard that is valid for everyone, for all time, it places people's own definitions of literacy at centre stage. This means as tutors needing to explore both our own starting points and assumptions about literacy and those of our students. Finally, it means a shift of focus from literacy as deficit or lack, something people haven't got, to recognising difference and diversity and challenging how these differences are valued within our society.

We want to provide some examples of what this shift means in practical terms, but first we need to explain the title we chose for this paper.

2. What do we mean by putting in to practice?

We chose this title for its deliberate ambiguity. There are three senses of "putting into practice" which we want to include. Firstly, practice often means **education and teaching**, and we are concerned here with how new views of literacy can be applied in educational settings. This includes classrooms, which can be nursery, primary, secondary, as well as adult basic education and further and higher education. There are links to be made here: Adult Basic education students are learning to write; university students are also embarking on learning to write in new ways. Putting views of

literacy into educational practice also means its role in professional development, where tutors, not just students, can address questions of the role of reading and writing in their lives.

Secondly, putting into practice can mean in **policy** - the way that the future of literacy programmes is visualised and the institutional frameworks within which they operate; how governments and potential governments might think about reading and writing and act on this understanding.

The third important sense of putting into practice, is where it means moving out of the classroom and into **everyday life**, seeing how something affects what we do. We are concerned with how new views of literacy are put into practice in everyday life, in how people in their homes deal with their children's education, with officialdom and the legal system. This also includes a critical examination of how the media represent literacy issues.

This means that what we are saying is equally relevant to us as teachers, students, parents, members of the public in that it encourages us to be reflective of the everyday practices that we are all part of and not to assume that we already know what literacy is. It is for these reasons that literacy studies has become identified with such things as collaborative research and the reflective practitioner, approaches which also share the idea that theory develops from practice, that it is part of the process of making sense of what is going on around us.

3. Why theorising literacy important

Part of our argument in pointing out that understandings of literacy are changing is that the way we approach and theorise about literacy crucially shapes our practice. It is important to examine the assumptions we hold and to make our own theories explicit. Theorising literacy is important because it links up different areas of work, enables us to see literacy in the bigger picture beyond the patch where we are. It can, for example, help us: to see links between the strands of this conference; to make international connections between literacy in different countries and cultures; to connect the work that goes on in different educational sectors; and, especially, to link what we are trying to do in literacy with changes in social and economic life more generally (as Sue Gardener does in her paper).

Theory can help us to see familiar things in a new way; to ask a new set of questions that may push our thinking out of the old ruts. There is a particular value in articulating theory at time of change or time of crisis or with new initiatives, such as the move of Adult Basic Education into colleges, or workplace or family literacy programmes. In these cases it can help us develop a way of talking about what we are doing which reflects our own ideals and priorities, rather than leaving us vulnerable to ways of talking imposed by others. It can support us when we make choices about how to shape our activities.

Theorising can encourage debate and questioning and gives a basis for a constructive critique which has been rather lacking in the culture of ABE in this country. This

represents a change in the discourse we are used to. For example, while there are positive aspects to having a strong national agency, one of the disadvantages is the monolithic discourse it encourages - which, as Sue Gardener pointed out, legitimates only certain things. We have one official version of what literacy is and what ABE has accomplished, that actually hides a much more complex reality of both successes and limitations. We need theory to help us engage with current policy and the research that is used to justify it, to help us assess and name strengths and limitations.

4. Examples of putting the new literacy studies into practice

We should emphasise what we said earlier about putting into practice: that putting the new literacy studies into practice is about being self-reflective, and observing closely the everyday practices going on around us. This could mean doing research focused on everyday practices. It could also mean bringing a research orientation into professional development, into teaching and learning. The following are some brief recent examples in the UK where these things are being done:

The first set of examples are concerned with **research on everyday practices**. This research involves close observation, detailed interviewing and analysis of texts. This is done in ethnographies of specific communities. Our own work has been the Literacy in the Community study. In this we have been documenting the reading and writing which people do in their everyday lives in Lancaster, England, including what goes on in people's homes and how this is different from the media stereotypes (e.g. Barton & Padmore 1991). The sense of there being different literacies is very clear in multilingual communities where different literacy practices can be associated with different languages in work based at Lancaster being carried out by Rachel Hodge and Kathryn Jones, working in Blackburn and in North Wales; and Arvind Bhatt and Marilyn Martin-Jones, working in Leicester - see Bhatt, 1995).

A different sort of community is evident in a detailed study of prison literacy being carried out by Anita Wilson. Prison is an institutional setting where there are extremely strong public stereotypes of illiteracy, and perceptions of problems with reading and writing. To take one example, she has investigated the amount of letter writing which goes on. Away from the education wing of prisons and in a group that you would expect to find little reading and writing, young males, there is a tremendous amount of letter writing and it has great social significance.

The next set of examples come from **ABE practice** where people have creatively merged the boundaries between research, teaching and learning by taking the resources offered by practice or research and recombining them or putting them to use in a new setting.

-- a London tutor Nora Hughes, who was a member of the Diploma course at Goldsmiths College, London. Nora took Mukul Saxena's (1994) description of the literacy practices of members of a multilingual community in Southall and used it to design a set of activities for her ESOL classes, transforming her students into ethnographers, researching their own communities (Hughes, 1992).

-- the "Connect" Family literacy project in Lothian which gets teachers and parents to co-research home practices and use the information to inform curricula for family literacy courses (see Keen, 1995) In this case, a clearly thought through stance on family literacy drew on Elsa Auerbach's (1989) discussion of the relationship between home and school in family literacy programmes in the USA and has lead to a practical strategy.

-- inspired by ideas from community writing and publishing. The Workplace Basic Skills project organised by Fiona Frank set up a residential weekend which brought together participants to compare their practices in the workplace and the role of literacy and basic skills courses in their working lives. Participants from a range of different workplaces were offered the opportunity to research and document their experiences with this particular focus in mind (Frank, 1992).

Finally, two examples which come from our teaching in higher education. In an undergraduate course entitled Literacy Studies, students were asked to explore the literacy practices of any domain. They were most imaginative in their responses, carrying out studies of literacy associated with motorway driving, rock climbing in the Lake District, working in shops and other work-places, and the intricacies of scoring in cricket. One student researched betting shop literacy. He went into the betting shop and observed how packed with literacy it was. The walls are covered with it. the technology, the roles, the relationships, the reading the writing. Crucially you cannot learn about betting shop literacy in any formal way; there were no instructions, it was assumed you knew, or you learned off friends. The student resorted to looking through the waste bin as a way of learning how to do it.

As an example of professional development, we worked with some Bangladeshi students who were also literacy trainers, The course was based in Lancaster and as part of it we gave them disposable cameras to take pictures around the city and the campus. It was very exciting to see how they took different photos from the ones we have been taking and developed a distinct view of reading and writing in a British city. We then used their photos in class discussions of how literacy is socially situated, how it belongs to particular place.

In professional development we find it useful for participants to keep in mind a triangle of their own practices, the students practices and the society's practices. We can constantly move around the triangle making comparisons between these three sets of practices.

5. Conclusions

Finally, we would like to provide an evaluation of how the New Literacy Studies is faring as a coherent social view of literacy. First the negative points: it is not being very successful in affecting media images of literacy or having much effect on the stated policies of political parties in the run-up to the next general election, where both main parties seem to embrace a narrow focus on methods of teaching, on just reading, and they fail to place it in any broader context. Many people here feel depressed about some of the changes in Adult Basic Education in Britain in the past

decade, for instance in the decline in community-based approaches to literacy and the shift away from more democratic, student-centred learning.

But there are some positive effects: for example, the way family literacy programmes have been put into practice in Britain so far seems to be very encouraging. They have been shifted by practitioners from the original government formulations of deficit into something more positive.

We are excited at the many projects, including those at this conference, which are putting the new literacy studies into practice, in the subjects covered and in the diversity of approaches. We can see it in the titles of strands at this conference and compare it with the conference we helped organise in Lancaster in 1984 (Hamilton and Barton, 1989). At that conference, we were beginning to talk about the politics of literacy and we were excited by student publishing and ideas about student participation in research and practice. However, we didn't talk about children, but kept to adults as a separate topic. We didn't think to talk about work-places, and we did not know how to make links with that very different subject of teaching English to speakers of other languages. It seems clear that in terms of understanding literacy we have taken many steps forward.

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PHOTOGRAPHY IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH: 'INSIDER/'OUTSIDER' IMAGES AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF MULTILINGUAL LITERACY PRACTICES

Rachel Hodge and Kathryn Jones

This is a summarised version of a jointly written paper about our use of collaborative photography in literacy research. Within different disciplines, researchers are addressing the controversy of using photography and film as research tools and as data. However, there has been, to date, little explicit discussion of research which is both collaborative and which makes use of photography. Our paper seeks to extend this discussion by describing and evaluating our use of collaborative photography in two different community contexts.

In our research, we are working within a social and ideological view of literacy (Street 1984 and 1993; Barton, 1994). Its focus is the study of people's literacy practices in their social and historical context, by photographing individual and community literacy practices in bilingual and multilingual settings. Kathryn's research is an on-going ethnographic study of the *Bilingual Literacy Practices of Welsh Speakers* in north-east Wales. Rachel's involved micro-ethnographic studies carried out in a *South Asian Blackburn Muslim community*. In this paper, we describe our work with co-researchers from these two communities (Rhian and Zuleka, Fazila and Adil) and the way in which we used photography in these studies.

We are both working within a democratic collaborative approach to research, which aims to share as much control with the co-researchers as possible, for as many of the stages of the process as constraints allow. This approach values firsthand 'insider' experience as a valid source of data and an essential complement to 'outsider' sources and understandings. Photographing literacy captures the visual quality and complements the way that other research tools such as written field notes and audio recordings document literacy. We both found that photography offered another possibility for people in the two communities to be more involved in the research.

In both contexts, all the participants took whatever photographs they wanted to, within the contexts of the different studies. Rhian and Kathryn took photos of Rhian's reading and writing practices at college and at home. Zuleka photographed her family in literacy moments at home as well as in the community. Rachel photographed other people in the community, such as in a mosque school, which Zuleka did not want to photograph herself. Fazila and Adil asked friends and family to take photographs of them in their own literacy moments.

The visual results of all this activity were a wide range of images: among others:

- a woman at a computer screen in a college resource room;
- two women in the canteen looking through a magazine;
- two friends lying on the bedroom floor, reading books;
- a girl and her grandmother writing a recipe at the kitchen table;
- a young man using ceefax on television at home, while, in another part of the same room, his father is praying.

SOME REFLECTIONS

The research involved several different layers of collaboration, which we group here under five headings.

(i) ***Planning and discussion***

Planning together what to photograph and how to take the photos involved us in making decisions together which had to take account of the agendas of everyone involved. As initiators of our respective research projects, we found ourselves having to
(1) make our own intentions explicit; (2) learn about our co-researchers' understnading and experiences of literacy; (3) explain our own understandings of a social view of language and literacy; and (4) discuss both the practicalities of and issues around documentaing languge and literacy practices. These discussions reflected both our *shared* and also our *different* positions as participants in the research.

(ii) ***Selecting images***

The decisions as to what to photograph were sometimes taken independently, sometimes in negotiation with others. On occasions, this involved joint photography sessions for Rhian and Kathryn, but mostly we each took our own photos, collaborating in the planning and analysis. It seems clear from our experience that selecting what photographs to take, like any other part of a research process, is highly interpretative. It would follow therefore that the strength of doing this collaboratively allows for different perspectives to be taken account of with broader, richer data as a result. Collaborative work allows for both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. It allows for 'people's own questions to be answered... and their own experience to be taken account of' (Hamilton, Ivanic and Barton, 1992).

(iii) ***Ownership of data***

Zuleka, Fazila, Adil and Rhian made their own decisions about the kinds of literacies they wanted to document with photographs. In doing this, they determined the way they and their families were represented. We think that the strength of these photos is that their depiction of their own literacies challenges any 'outsider' stereotypes of the literacies of particular groups of people - such as 'teenagers', or 'Asians'. The 'public' and 'private' images, collaboratively collected, enriched these micro-ethnographic studies. The danger of intrusion and disruption which may be real is micro-ethnographic work is controlled by one outside researcher is in this way reduced. Photography also seems to be a particularly effective way to take account of a child's ownership of research into her own social practices. A collaborative and democratic approach enabled participants to work creatively to their own styles, personalities, age and preferences.

(iv) ***Discussion and analysis***

We found that discussing the photos that we and our co-researchers had taken was a crucial part of our collaborative analysis of community and personal literacy practices. Looking at photographs together provided another opportunity for discussing our co-researcher's personal literacy practices in more detail, and in so doing we developed an understanding of what possible social meanings may be drawn from these.

What then is the importance of a collaborative approach which uses photography? Here are some of the answers we suggest:

> Photographs produced in this way not only provide images of literacy materials, the constellation of texts and languages in community contexts, but they show people engaged both in actual literacy events and in re-created 'literacy moments'.
>
> Such photographs can stand as independent images, but for a fuller understanding they need to be interpreted as part of a set of personal and/or public photos, and serve as a catalyst for more detailed investigation.
>
> Above all, these photographs offer 'insider' co-researchers' own choice of representation, of themselves and of their families, using their 'eye' and observations on the literacy practices in which they are shown.

In short, it seems clear to us that our co-researchers' input into the process of documenting and analysing literacy practices through photography provides a more detailed study with broader perspectives than could have been achieved by a single researcher, offering a deeper understanding of the multilingual literacy practices of the people we were working with than we could have arrived at on our own.

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MAKING SENSE OF EXPERIENCE : THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Julia Clarke

Autobiographical writing has long been valued by adult literacy teachers and learners as an activity in which we can develop confidence and competence in the use of language/literacy skills while constructing an identity for ourselves as *author*, and *authorising* our experience.

As ABE funding is increasingly tied to the accreditation of narrowly functional literacy skills, those of us committed to promoting broader conceptions of literacy might be interested in exploring those concepts of auto/biography, life history and personal narrative which are gaining acceptance as research methods, or "ways of knowing" within and across academic disciplines including arts and humanities, cultural (and gender) studies, psychology, education, linguistics and sociology.

An account of my own research offers one example of the ways in which personal narrative might be used as a research tool to investigate a problem in experience. The problem at the centre of this research is related to a conceptual (as well as practical) conflict between notions of "progress", both at work and in continuing education, and the needs, demands and desires associated with domestic life and relationships.

The problem presented itself to me when, in the course of a critical review of my own practice in adult literacy teaching since the 1970s, I tried to evaluate this practice in terms of education for "liberation" or for "domestication". Subsequent reading of feminist theory led me to question the gendered nature of Paulo Freire's opposing terms and to think about the ways in which this conception of "liberation", like common conceptions of progress, denies and suppresses the "domestication" on which it depends.

At the conference workshop I introduced the problem by offering some information about my own domestic, educational and paid work experiences and asking participants to share similar information about their own lives. Some of us found it far more difficult to tell relative strangers about our domestic situations and relationships than to talk about experiences of paid work or education. But it was interesting to find that these small disclosures of "private" and personal information seemed to create a wider agenda for the accounts people gave of their "public" lives. In previous sessions, our introductions had been confined to those aspects of our educational or working life which we saw as directly relevant to research and practice in Lifelong Literacies. But in this workshop, participants talked about working in shops and pubs and factories. There were accounts of educational failure as well as successes. They talked about learning Arabic and Sign Language and Morris Dancing. These rich and somewhat chaotic accounts gave a far stronger sense of Lifelong Learning than those which had been confined within the boundaries of a purely professional interest.

I went on to give an account of my recent academic career, showing how my own domestic, paid work and educational experiences are implicated in both the formulation of my research problem and in the kinds of research methods I have chosen to use.

The question I am asking in my research is whether we can begin to think about concepts of "liberation" or progress which acknowledge and embrace a commitment to looking after our bodies, to enjoying sensual pleasures and to taking care of each other.

In order to explore this somewhat abstract question, and to relate it to the world of everyday experience, I am currently recording life story accounts of working, caring and learning narrated by 18 adult learners in West Dorset who:

- have a significant responsibility for the care of dependant/s
- are engaged in additional part-time work outside the home
- left school with few or no formal qualifications
- agreed to participate in a series of individual interviews and small group discussions over a two year period.

Course tutors in Further and Adult Education, using these criteria, have enabled me to locate a group of adults who have chosen to continue their education despite facing all the barriers most commonly identified as those which prevent continuing participation in "lifelong learning". Thirteen of these were enrolled on courses within an Adult Basic Education programme (including literacy, numeracy, and a "Fresh Start for Women" course). The other five were enrolled on courses in hairdressing, care, business management, community organisation and counselling. I had hoped to include at least one man but, given the criteria, it is not surprising that all the participants are women.

Each of these eighteen women has been talking to me about childhood memories, adult life, and their hopes for the future, in three, hour-long, tape-recorded interviews. Each interview has a different focus on "Education", on "Work Outside the Home", and on "Unpaid Work in the Home". The research group members are given a set of questions in advance, and some have chosen to work on these in their regular literacy classes. With the first questionnaire, more than half the group provided written responses, but this dwindled to six or seven by the time we got to the third set of questions. All those who attend a literacy class chose to write, while the "non-writers" include those who have now reached the more advanced levels of academic study like A'Levels, Diploma or Access courses. This combination of written and verbal responses to the same questions provides some interesting data for a study of the relationship between literacy skills and practices and between spoken and written language.

The focus of my research, however, is largely on the meanings which people associate with actions and events in their lives, and on the motivating factors and favoured identities of a particular group of people engaged in the multiple activities of organised learning, working in the public sphere, and caring for others at home. So I have decided to use the written narratives as an extra dimension, to supplement other contextual information which I can bring to the analysis of the spoken narratives, using a linguistic framework. The stories people tell about their lives do not provide us with objective knowledge about actions, events or identities, but the structure of the stories - the ordering of events in a particular sequence, the choice of words and grammatical forms - can point to the kinds of questions we need to ask. What's the point of this story? Why is this word or phrase given such emphasis? How does this story function to express, confirm and validate a particular self-identity? What cultural values are embedded in the episodes and themes of this story? What are the larger ideologies that structure the narrative?

After trying out various theoretical frameworks for the interpretation of narratives, I have found one which offers the combination of flexibility and attention to detail which suits the way I like to work and also seems to fit my data well. This is an approach developed by James Paul Gee, an American linguist whose framework is built around poetic features of language which can be found in narratives told by children and adults belonging to diverse social groups. Gee's approach is flexible because it can be used with narratives which do not necessarily have a clear beginning, middle and end. The organization of a spoken narrative into idea units, lines and stanzas shows how "..narratives can have a global organization even when they are not being repeated from memory as stored wholes, even when the narrator does not necessarily know in advance where she is going and where she is going to end up." [Gee,1991:37]

In the workshop, I presented a story, a tape-recorded extract from one of my interviews, with a transcript of this story which I had organized into idea units, lines and stanzas. The story was about a childhood experience of coming home from school to a cold, empty house. Within the story, the narrator related this experience to her decision not to apply for promotion at work because she wanted to be at home for her child. There was too little time in the workshop, and it is too early in my research, to draw any particular insights or conclusions from this story. But even a brief look at the "focus words" in each stanza - words which appear to be stressed as new or asserted information in the narrator's intonation - drew comments and questions from colleagues in the workshop about cultural values attached to "home" and "family" and about features showing ambivalence in the way the story was told. Gee claims that interpretation, like visual perception, "..is an amalgam of structural properties of texts and creative inferences drawn on the basis of context and previous experience." [Gee,1991:16] In this all too brief exchange, I wished that I might be able to call on the combined "previous experience" of the 25 people at the conference workshop for the interpretation of all the stories I am collecting. I now return to the solitary task of combing through my transcripts, identifying the "structural properties" of stories and the linguistic features which hold them together. My approach to this task, however, has been enriched by a small glimpse of the passions - for gardens, cats, children, lovers, languages or dancing - which any of us can choose to celebrate or conceal when we try to make sense of our experience.

FURTHER READING

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Self-Directed Learning: Liberating or Oppressive? Developing Student Autonomy in Open Learning

Chris O'Mahony and Wendy Moss

In this paper, we look at some ways that autonomy in learning has been defined, by different psychologists and education theorists, and how these ideas have been incorporated in different political and philosophical perspectives. We also discuss some examples of how students balance autonomy and support in Open Learning Centres, based mainly on our work on the Open Learning in ABE Research Project (1991-3)[1]. Finally we raise some questions for our workshop.

The belief that learners should be enabled to be autonomous or self directed now underpins much liberal adult education and adult basic education practice. Julia Clarke (1993) reported a commitment to student centred learning amongst her colleagues teaching literacy in West Dorset, and Yvonne Hillier (1994) also found that a student centred philosophy was a central tenet of adult basic education tutors.

In the early 50's, Carl Rogers argued for a humanistic student-centred education, where the student can learn in a climate where her/his views and feelings are accepted non-judgementally, and where the tutor facilitates, rather than directs, their learning. Rogers argues that this is *democratic* education, producing responsible, self directed, critical individuals. Malcolm Knowles (1980) in his theory of andragogy (the theory of how adults learn) argued that it is a part of maturation process that learners move from dependency to self directiveness and teachers have a responsibility to encourage that growth. David Boud (1987) saw the main characteristic of 'autonomous learning' as individuals taking significant responsibility for their learning, deciding on their own learning needs, selecting resources , recognising completion and reflecting on the learning process.

These theories relate self directed learning to democratic principles and the development of the *individual*. Paolo Freire however conceived of a democratic and liberating education amongst Brazilian literacy students that fostered a collective not individual autonomy. In dialogue between tutor and learners, students move to conscientisation where they become aware of reality (of their own oppression) and consequently to acknowledge and claim their power to actively engage in and change the world. He said in a discussion with Ira Shor in 1987, 'Liberation is a social act. Liberating education *is a social process of illumination* ". (Freire & Shor, A Pedagogy for Liberation, 1987)

The notion of self directed, autonomous learning, and an enthusiasm for open and

[1] A collaborative research project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council and based at University of London Goldsmiths college, and the Centre for the Study of Education and Training, University of Lancaster. The team included Chris O'Mahony and Wendy Moss in London and Sue Bergin and Mary Hamilton in Lancaster. Chris O'Mahony and Sue Bergin were the research workers.

distance learning was taken on by governments in Europe and Britain in the late 80's, not as a promotion of critical thinking or education for liberation, but because of its cost effectiveness in upgrading skills of the workforce. Geoffrey Holland in 1992, at a NEC/CRAC Conference argued that

> Without it (open and distance learning) we shall never attain the critical reduction in cost we have to achieve and the enhanced value for money in terms of a return on time or resources by employers or individuals alike'

Self directed learning has thus been neatly subsumed into right wing philosophies with their emphasis on individual responsibility. Self direction of itself does not lead to critical thinking or questioning of oppression. Freire's (1987) view was that all education was directive. He was perhaps referring here to the 'hidden curriculum' - the assumptions values and beliefs that are implicitly transmitted as part of any curriculum. As John Saunders (1988) and Julia Clarke (1993) have noted that student centred and self directed learning can be used as easily as any other approach to deliver a 'traditional' curriculum or dominant ideology.

Open Learning Centres for ABE students

In the late 80's the DES made £7 million available to set up a network of 72 open learning centres in England and Wales on 3 year grants. Some of these were set up as pilot centres by ALBSU. The mission statement of one of these centres was cited as an example in ALBSU's first report in 1991:

> the provision of an environment and learning opportunities which will cause effective learning to take place, where materials are learner-centred and where the learner takes responsibility and credit for his or her own learning (p.11).

In this early statement, the environment and student centred materials are emphasised . As we studied open learning centres in London over two years during our research, we found that self direction was always the core philosophy of tutors and organisers, but the meaning and practice of open learning was continually being developed. Open learning, we found, didn't mean learning on your own without other students or tutors. It was not totally resource based. It didn't even always mean open and flexible access (pressure on space and resources meant most centres had to develop appointment and booking systems). Students did work to their own programmes, but at almost all stages they engaged with workers as tutors in the learning process: directing them to resources, marking their work, helping when they got stuck, giving feedback on their work, reviewing their progress. Many centres had begun to introduce elements of group work into the provision, and some suggested students go to adult basic education groups and use the open learning centre as a supplement to the work generated in them.

In one centre, development of autonomy linked closely to collective action for change. When Chris visited this centre she found a student group who seemed in charge of their own centre. They had organised their own student committee to defend the centre against closure. Students had identified a common bond and developed a collective self direction. At the same time, this seemed to have its spin offs at an *individual* level. Many students seemed to be increasingly confident and self directed in their learning. One student said:

> I've gained confidence. I've found I can do things I've been told I couldn't. I've now got to the point where I'm telling the teachers what to do - they're not telling me (well, not always) .

Stages in self direction in open learning

In our research, we noticed that within any Open Learning Centre, not all students used the centres in the same way. Some used the staff little, others depended on staff more. It seemed to us that students were in various 'stages' of self direction requiring different approaches and inputs from tutors. G.O. Grow (1991) has suggested a 4 stage model of how learners develop self-direction:

Stage	*Student*	*Tutor*
Stage 1	Dependent	Authority / Coach
Stage 2	Interested	Motivator / Guide
Stage 3	Involved	Facilitator
Stage 4	Self directed	Consultant / Delegator

He argues that students should be able to choose the appropriate teaching style according to which stage they are in their learning. Although new situations may mean we are thrust back into dependence, and this is not a defect, he also implies a linear development towards Stage 4. Celia Levy (1994) argues in contrast that we do not necessarily move through these stages in order. Some aspects of self direction may be achieved easily, while other aspects are harder as they demand confronting personal experiences earlier in our lives and taking power back to ourselves.

We decided to think how this model applied to four students we had worked with: one who took part in our research, and three whom Chris works with now in an Open Learning Centre. For each one we say where they could appear on Grow's model of self direction.

The Students

Student A was one of the students we interviewed for the Open Learning Project. She was born in Ghana and had run her own market business .and was attending open learning. She organised a student survey and reported on it as part of our project. In all these ways she has been clearly a 'Stage 4' person: self-directed and independent. In the open learning centre, she was working through Wordpower and on her spelling and writing. Although she was very motivated, she depended on a tutor, or other students, to give her guidance on what to do and to help her when she was stuck. If she didn't find someone to help she would just have to leave it and she found this very frustrating.

In context of an open learning centre, A appears as a stage 2/3 learner in that she is able to use her teachers as motivators, guides and facilitators. She also uses other students as a similar resource. Although she is (and has been for some time) at stage 4 in her outside life, in her English learning she is only able to progress with the support of a guide.

Student B is working towards a teaching qualification via a Distance learning package. She works unaided. She spends a great deal of time on the computer network, wordprocessing her assignments. She uses the staff for advice and information which will help her complete her assignments (rather than her distance learning tutor whom she has difficulty contacting.)

Student B may well be classed as Stage 4. She is apparently comfortable with the style of learning offered in an open learning centre and is able to use the staff there as consultants to her learning process. She is able to organise her own time, find her own resources (including asking tutors), and decide when she has finished and what she needs next.

Student C started coming to open learning last Autumn. She is in her forties, born in the Caribbean and reads and writes fluently. She had a very traditional style of education in Trinidad which involved drilling, spelling bees and handwriting practice. She has enormous difficulty getting to grips with an open learning system and needs to be talked through every task several times. Although she can read the instructions on the worksheets they rarely makes sense to her and she is only able to function as long as she has a tutor sitting with her.

Like student A, C is clearly a Stage 4 in the outside world. In the open learning centre, however, she tends to revert to a Stage 1 dependency model, seeing teachers as authorities and coaches. Presumably her past educational experiences have trained her into a submissive and powerless role in relation to her learning process and she is not yet able to move on from this position.

Student D is a 17 year old Somali young woman who has been attending an open

learning centre for over a year. She is doing a level 2 NVQ in Business Administration. It is clear to the staff that she is out of her depth and struggling with the English and vocational aspects of her course. However, in order to cope, she brings all her assignments to open learning and over a period of time manages to persuade the tutors to do the assignments for her, bit by bit, by taking it to different tutors. She speaks very little in English, although she appears to understand what is said to her, but she is very able to communicate her desperation and her determination.

D seems to be an interesting combination of Stages 1 and 4. On the one hand she is completely dependent upon her teachers to tell her what to do. On the other, the task as she sees it is to get her assignment completed, regardless of any understanding or interest or involvement with the subject. She therefore misses out Stages 2 and 3 of the learning process, but uses Stage 4 processes (ie using tutors as consultants and delegates to perform her task for her.)

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The model seems to us to have been quite a useful way of describing the varying uses students make of tutors in an open learning centre. We would suggest that people move backwards and forwards through this model throughout their lives depending on what they are learning and where they find themselves. Somebody may be Stage 4 in many aspects of their lives and learning, but at earlier stages in their literacy learning. Like Grow, we believe it is important for the tutor and student to negotiate a balance between the learner's readiness for self direction and the tutor's intervention.

However, one area where we disagree with both him, and some other theorists mentioned earlier, is the assumption that being self directed in our learning has a tight correspondence with being more mature in our personal lives. It seems to us that many very mature and self directed adults need to start within the earlier 'stages' of the model as they return to learning. It doesn't seem to us that academics doing higher level research degrees (which are very self directed) are automatically at an advanced level of personal maturation!

Like Julia Clarke (1993) we are wary of glib notions of self directed learning. Facilitators need to be clear about their educational aims. As she puts it, the rhetoric of self-direction has become mainstream and now involves the "distribution of learning packages and assessment of competencies designed to classify and regulate both our vision and our aspirations through mechanisms of efficiency and consumer choice" (p.vi). Freire said that no education is neutral. If our vision is promoting open ended, democratic participation and social change we must be clear about that and hold it as part of our vision of autonomy.

At our conference workshop, we looked at our own learning histories and our feelings about learning, in order to gain insights into how we might be most

effective supporters to others. Some questions we looked at in the workshop were:

In what ways are we autonomous learners? In what areas? In what ways do we want to be?

How do we recognise which stage in self direction we and other learners are at (and do these stages makes sense?)
What role can or should we take in supporting people to move on to the next stage?

How relevant our Freire's views on liberating education through collective action for change ?

What curriculum are we promoting? Have we scrutinised our own hidden agendas?

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TEACH THE MOTHER TO REACH THE CHILD?

Jacqui Armour

BACKGROUND

I have combined my interests in women's literacy and in media representation of adult literacy in order to begin to answer the question 'How is women's literacy represented in the context of family literacy?' The media plays a major role in shaping society's perception of itself. Roger Fowler has written convincingly about the ways in which subliminal linguistic features work in newspapers' ideological practice of representation and the crucial role that language has in mediating reality (Fowler 1995). I am interested in how society has constructed 'the adult illiterate' as a stereotype and in the language used to describe adult literacy* and decided to concentrate my research on newspaper articles.

In June 1993 John Patten, then Secretary of State for Education, announced plans to fund pilot family literacy schemes. His slogan was 'Teach the mother and reach the child'. It was this concept of family literacy that was taken up by the press. Shortly after this announcement a group of 28 women literacy educators met to explore the contexts of our work. We found that we were working with a diverse range of women with different experiences and expectations. We felt that literacy learning should address the whole of women's lives, not just their roles as mothers or wives, or workers etc. (Mace 1993). These two events set the scene for my research.

SELECTING THE TEXTS

I searched the British Newspaper Index for the period from 1/6/93 to 31/12/95 and selected seven articles concerned with family literacy:

Literacy Drive Puts Accent on Family, The Guardian, 16/6/93
Schools Blamed for Adult Illiteracy, The Telegraph, 16/6/93
* Family Literacy Plan to Kick off despite Low Funding, The Guardian, 6/7/93
Lessons in Literacy enrol Families to Tackle Handicap, The Times, 14/10/93
The Sweetest Thing is to be Taught with You, The Guardian, 26/10/93
Listen With Mother While She Learns, The Independent, 9/12/93
Parents Learning With Children, The Guardian, 20/1/95

ANALYSIS

The form of analysis I have used is based on work done by Sarah Mills (Mills 1995), who argues that it is necessary to analyse a wide variety of factors such as the role of the reader and gendered frameworks. She provides a feminist model of text which combines context of production and context of reception.

During my analysis I asked the following questions:

- Who is the intended reader?
- What are my expectations of the text? How stereotypical do I expect it to be?

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*This research has been part of my work on the M. Ed. in literacy (Sheffield University), 1994-6.

* Reproduced at the end of this article.

- Which adult family members are represented? How are they named?
- What verbs are used that are concerned with women's literacy? Are they concerned with actions or feeling and emotions?
- What adjectives are used to describe women and literacy?
- Are there ready made phrases or figurative language in the text that could refer to gender differences in relation to literacy?
- Are there ways in which women's literacy differs from men's in the text?
- What are the pictorial representations?

RESULTS

Although on reading the articles 'at face value' they did not appear to have the level of stereotypical language that I had expected, the results show that this language is there, and was more hidden than I had expected it to be. I was quite worried about this as I had probably already read most of them at the time of publication and had not noticed what was going on in the texts.

- Mothers were mentioned over three times more often than fathers, and parents twice as many times as mothers.
- Over 75% of the verbs concerning women's literacy described actions or functions, for example: studying, improving, enrolled, learning, struggle, teach etc.
- Over 50% of the verbs described mental processes, with only 22% of these being externalised (9.1% of the total). Women's literacy is represented as mainly an internal mental process, we think, feel, worry, know, hope, want , pretend and realise.
- Of the material action processes 25% were superventive (unintentional) with intentional material actions making up only 32% of the total. The implication is that women are not very physically active and that a significant amount of our actions have unintentional results.
- Almost 75% of the images produced by adjectives are negative: stupid, afraid, hard, difficult, threatened, desperate, terrified etc.
- The positive images were of positive aspects of literacy rather than of women using literacy.
- 55% of the ready made phrases in the text were gender encoded, with 75% of these female gendered: 'welfare mums', 'at mother's knee', 'listen with mother' etc.
- The pictorial images of women were all subjective and emotive: women sitting with children on their laps reading to children and a young woman holding a young baby up over her face and smiling. Images of women outnumbered those of men by 3-1. The men were not doing anything to do with either literacy or children, but were photographed in neutral surroundings.

CONCLUSIONS

These articles appeared in a social climate in the UK which, fuelled by the media, is laying the blame for all kinds of social problems with mothers, with women. We have seen the 'home alone' stories and articles about young women becoming pregnant to get council housing and state benefits. Single mothers have also been

blamed for truancy, joy riding and child crime (from shoplifting to murder), so why not for 'illiteracy'?

All of the programmes featured are based on a deficit model. Parents (mothers) are depriving their children. Mothers are being blamed for low literacy levels among children, and are being targeted to sort it out. It is the mothers who have been failed by the school system, and who have their own literacy needs who are under pressure from these family literacy programmes.

According to statistics there is a link between low parental literacy levels and the low educational achievement of children. The Basic Skills Agency reports that 18% of children surveyed came from families whose parents have basic skills problems. 48% of these children (only 8.6% of the total) were in the low reading score group (ALBSU 1993). So we could say that over half of the children whose parents reported basic skills problems are *not* in the low reading score group, and prove that these inter-generational links do not exist. Another study (reported in The Observer in December 1993) has shown that children's reading levels improved by up to 50% when they read with their teddy bears!

Should child welfare/education be the sole reason for wanting to see increased literacy levels among women? There is no funding for women's literacy itself. The implication is that women's literacy does not have as high a value as men's or as children's. Literacy for women is advocated only when it will enable us to become better mothers, better wives, house keepers, carers. Not when it would enable us to take more control over our own lives and start to improve our own situations.

Women often give 'to help my children' as their main reason for wanting to attend literacy classes. This is a socially acceptable reason for wanting to improve their skills. The mothers we meet are already putting the needs of their children first. As adult educators we know of women who have stopped coming to classes or have not joined because of the pressure of family responsibilities. 'Teach the mother and reach the child' denies any interest that women may have in literacy learning for their own development and ignores women who are child free.

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Students teaching, teachers learning

FAMILY LEARNING IN WEST GLAMORGAN

Sandra Morton

A few years ago family literacy was almost unheard of in Britain. There were a few small local initiatives working with families and a small number of development workers, policy-makers and practitioners were aware of inter-generational literacy programmes in other parts of the world. Those faraway places are seen by some as in the forefront of new ideas and developments in education; others see them as the source of all fashionable trends, hype, jargon and excess. However, family literacy was seen as an initiative worth trying here and was formally introduced into Britain by the Basic Skills Agency in 1993. It has since spread, changed, developed and become part of operational and development plans across the country.

This article is an attempt to describe the beginnings and growth of family learning in one small area of the country. (An area which, thanks to unitary authorities and local government re-organisation does not even exist anymore.) It is a description of one model which works here; it is not put forward as the only workable or best working model.

Need for Family Learning

The need for improved basic skills in this country at every age and level is reported nearly every day in both local and national press. The Basic Skills Agency study, "Parents and Children" (1993) reported on the relationship between parents' self-reported literacy problems and their children's reading performance in primary school. It said that 72% of children whose parents had reading problems and low incomes were in the lowest score group for reading.

Two key policy documents in the early 1990's stressed the importance of family learning in children's literacy development. The NIACE document, "Riches beyond Price" highlights the potential of using families to encourage learning. Titus Alexander and Peter Clyne state in their introduction, "Learning within families is usually more lasting and influential than any other. Family life provides a foundation and context for all other learning." Sir Ron Dearing states, "... if ways could be found to involve mothers and fathers in the initial teaching of reading we would make a huge contribution to the raising of educational standards."

In the Community Education Service in West Glamorgan we read the reports, heard Dr. Tom Sticht of the U.S. describe "Wider Opportunities for Women", an inter-generational literacy programme and were excited. Women were always under-represented in our basic skills groups and Employment Service courses. South Wales is still on the whole an area where many girls, especially in disadvantaged areas, leave school with few or no qualifications to marry. Caring for children and domestic routines are the responsibility of mothers (and grandmothers). Part-time employment is scarce for such women. What does exist is usually night-time filling of supermarket shelves, cleaning and evening care work or small numbers of teatime or night factory shift work. The need to raise adult basic skills standards along with expectation and confidence levels was clear to us. This seemed such a simple solution that we wondered why no one had tried it before. It had the elements of success already built in: using a local, familiar venue, the pre-existing strong motivation that parents have to want better for their children.

The existing, small basic skills team which I co-ordinate sat down to brainstorm ideas of the way forward. We had only our past experience of teaching (some school, more ABE), our own parenting experience, ABE students and teacher friends to consult and the courage or foolhardiness to proceed.

Our Community Education Officers and Manager were the first to persuade. They readily agreed that it was worth trying. So, using existing budget, the basic skills team already employed and the hope of some future small grant funding from the BSA, the project began. It must be recorded that the LEA and Community Education in particular continue to be committed to family education and this commitment takes the form of funding as well as encouraging words.

The Beginning

The scheme started in May 1994 in two schools in Swansea both sited in areas of multiple deprivation. It began with an informal chat with two teachers personally known to us to tell them about the idea and gauge their reactions. "This is like the answer to a prayer," one said, "I have been wondering for some time now how to get parents involved in helping. I have workshops every year but seeing them once isn't enough; I haven't time for more."

She spoke to her Headteacher the following morning and within a month a group of eight women (six mothers, two grandmothers) began coming to the school once a week. The women all had a child who was struggling with reading and having extra language support during the week. They were invited by the Headteacher for a cup of coffee while hearing about an exciting new project which could help them to help their children. The teacher, who is also the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, followed the short written message with a personal, reassuring approach to each parent persuading them for their child's sake to come and see what it was about. In all cases then and since, it is the pre-existing welcoming ethos of the school and their existing relationship with parents which persuades parents to come for the first time.

The women came one morning each week to work with a basic skills tutor for two hours. Their children came to join them for the final hour when each mother/grandmother worked with her own child.

Their purpose in coming is to support their child's learning. As a team, we decided that the early sessions at least must concentrate on working towards that aim. Sessions aimed at improving the parents' basic skills would have to wait until the participants asked for such activities.

One of the sessions involved looking at picture books: parents first and then parents with children. The children were 8 and 9 years old. Most could read though several were still struggling for fluency. The apprehension and anxiety of both parents and children was palpable as they sat in pairs with the task of talking (not reading) to each other for 30 minutes about the books. The tutor and teacher went from pair to pair asking questions, listening, seeking reactions and responses. The noise level in the room increased a little during the hour as they relaxed, but not much and all participants were relieved when the session was over.

The following week the tutor asked the parents how they felt about the session. One perceptive parent immediately said it made her realise how little she talked to her son even though she often gave him instructions and information. Two months later the transformation was obvious when the same parents and children played another information game The noise level in the room on that occasion was much greater than before; parents and children had to be told several times that they must finish for lunch.

After six meetings the tutor, in a review session, asked the parents what they did or did more of since coming to the group. They made comments such as, "listen more to my child;" "talk to them more about things around you;" "talk about pictures and story, not just read;" "ask why."

Present Position

In the two years since then, the family learning programme has grown and developed in a partnership between the Community Education Service and Neath College, first through a sponsorship and then a franchise agreement. There are now family learning groups in 23 schools in West Glamorgan. All of the schools are in disadvantaged areas where high unemployment, low skill levels, few job prospects, low self-esteem, underachievement and past educational failure are all common in adults.

Groups meet in primary, junior and secondary schools working with children of various ages depending on what individual schools want. Most work with parents/adults and with parents and children together though a small number work only with parents. There is one Welsh language and one ESOL family learning group. All groups meet for one half-day per week. Some parents who originally came to support their children have now formed a basic skills group within the school. Others have progressed onto other community education or FE courses.

Almost all of the participants are women. For many it is their first opportunity from their caring and domestic roles back into a group of adults whose first purpose is not social or domestic. One participant said about coming to the sessions, "It has made me realise that I still have a brain. . .and it works." They attend regularly and most miss only for illness or appointments. The few who leave before the sessions end usually do so because they get a job, their work pattern (or their partner's) changes or there is a domestic crisis.

Participants negotiate the course content with the tutor who also discusses with the school what they see as priority issues. Review and evaluation discussions are regular features of all groups.

Problems do arise within the provision. There can be problems in setting up the group. They arise when a school does not have the easy, open relationship with parents which it thinks it has If the relaxed, friendly welcome is not there, parents will not come or if "summoned", then they will sit stiffly, nod politely and answer as if there is a hidden tape recorder in the room which relays all comments, complaints or "wrong answers" back to the Headteacher, Governors and staff.

A group of parents who are encouraged to think, ask questions and discuss learning can become confident and strong, which may appear a threat, real or perceived, by some teachers or Headteachers.

Occasionally the parents and/or the school may have unrealistically high expectations of what the sessions can change in parents' or children's performance or attitude in a very short time.

A small number of parents have come to a group feeling that the only appropriate activity for the group is to "teach us how to teach our children to read" and that each week they should read page after page, as many pages as possible, from a reading book which is part of a reading scheme for an hour with their child.

There are many relationships and needs within the group for the tutor to consider, balance and try to meet: school with pupil; school with parent; parent and child; parent and parent; parent as adult learner; parent as parent; parent as customer/consumer of education. Not all tutors are equally happy working with adults, children, parents and children or schools.

However, in spite of some occasional difficulties the response of parents, children and schools to family learning is very positive.

Feedback

Reviews and final evaluation questionnaires for adult participants regularly include comments like these. "It's fun." "I've made friends.' "I don't feel so isolated now." "I realise other people have the same problems as me. I thought (child's name) was the only slow one." "I feel happier about going to the school now." "I have more confidence." "There is more to life than being a housewife and mother; there are opportunities beyond the home."

Asked about changes in their children or how they as a parent help them, they say, "I have more patience and understanding;" "know how to make learning fun;" "more ideas about how to help and the confidence to do it;" "I learned to go at (child's name) pace; don't push;" "there's more than one right answer;" "we enjoy doing things together now."

Schools say that pupils who have taken part show more enthusiasm, motivation and confidence. They are more willing to ask questions and to attempt new tasks. They begin to give more value to education. The schools also say that parents who have taken part are more willing to ask questions of and express opinions to teachers.

Conclusion

Family learning will continue in both the new Counties of Swansea and Neath-Port Talbot. It may have been family literacy which first excited us but that is now too narrow a term for what is happening. The family learning groups are about adults learning about learning -- for their children and for themselves. They are about relationships and attitudes which change: in children when they see a parent coming to school each week to learn and to enjoy themselves; in parents who build or begin to re-build some self-esteem. Both the raison d'etre and the reward for the course are fulfilled when a woman comes in and says, "I joined a computer course last week and I never would have done it if I hadn't come here." Another time, another parent: "I won my (benefit) tribunal because of this group. It's given me the confidence to speak up. They woman they sent to help me put the case didn't say anything. She said she didn't need to because I did it all myself."

When the tutor arrives to find a group of seven all huddled around the newly printed leaflet detailing September courses at the FE college deciding which courses they want to join, then it is clear why family learning is a way of widening participation and developing lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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UNDERSTANDING NURSERY EDUCATION
A COURSE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

Foufou Savitzky

This course is run in a nursery, in the heart of the London Borough of Southwark. It is a typical inner city area in many respects with the problems and riches of such an environment. According to the latest local education statistics (1993-1994) over 55% of the borough's total school population is of ethnic minority background; 4.2% of the total school population are refugees; approx. 55% of the total school population receive free school meals. The area in which the course takes place is due for demolition and rebuilding and there is a greater percentage of ethnic minority residents, unemployment, low income etc. than in many other parts of the borough.

Within Southwark as a whole, there has been a substantial drop in adult literacy provision. A few years ago the college took over the adult education institute and, for financial reasons, has over the years closed branches. The last remaining one is closing this summer. The college provides adult literacy classes but only within a very formal setting: security guards at the door, large premises etc... and for financial reasons a lot of emphasis is placed on accreditation. There is no guarantee of a crèche place for ABE students and these are only available for children over a year. Public transport within the borough is not always easy, so access to the few remaining centres is difficult for a lot of people. There are 4 voluntary literacy schemes within the borough but all have waiting lists.

The **Understanding Nursery Education Course** was developed at the request of parents/carers at the nursery. Two of us from the London Language & Literacy Unit had run a discussion group for parents/carers over a period of a term at the school on a variety of topics and one of the issues that came up constantly was that of parents not understanding the rationale behind the way the children were taught at the nursery[1]. This led to discontent on the part of the parents many of whom expected their children to be taught very formally in a firmly structured environment. We designed the course to enable them to have access to the pedagogical reasoning behind the practice and to consequently be able to support their children through their education from an informed base and having had an opportunity to critically discuss the methods of education used and the type of education they want from their children. A lot of emphasis is placed on the enormous contributions parents and carers have already made to their children's education prior to their entering nursery school. The course is accredited by the London Open College Federation at entry, level 1 and level 2.

The course lasts twenty weeks and we meet for the whole day on Thursdays. It started in January 1996. A crèche worker is employed to look after the toddlers and babies. Older children are allowed to join the nursery children.

Course delivery includes some formal input, a lot of discussion and group work and a lot of practical work. The practical work includes making books, games etc... and then using them with children in the nursery.

The Course Participants:
The course is not specifically for literacy students. It is open to any parent/carer who thinks they would benefit from it. On the course there is a male research scientist from Nigeria, a member of the political opposition in exile from Nigeria (male), a qualified and working nurse, four parents who received special education as children, a foster mother, a school governor etc... At least half the group have no academic qualifications at all, and at least half the group, not necessarily the same half, are bilingual. The two

[1] For an account of some earlier work, see: Savitzky, F (1995) 'Parents in Education' in Savitzky, F **Living Literacies**, London Language & Literacy Unit: 18-24

of us who run the course are trained in school and adult education in the areas of adult literacy and ESOL.

Below are profiles of some of the participants and the outcomes of the course for them identified with their help. Although this course is not specifically aimed at adults with literacy needs, for the purposes of this paper participants who would clearly meet the criteria for a more traditional family literacy project have been selected.

Denise *- Denise has three sons. The middle one, the school and Denise, are concerned about as he does not appear to grasp things as quickly as other children. The youngest is nearly two and attends all the sessions with Denise. He is very small for his age and appears to use very little language. Denise finds writing very difficult: for instance she cannot always spell her children's names. She has never said anything about this nor has she ever mentioned that she would like more help with her literacy.*

Denise has never said that she has difficulties with reading and writing but for many weeks did not attempt any reading or writing tasks in the class. After a term of the course she began to attempt to fill in some of the task sheets on her own and feels confident enough to ask other course members for help with spelling or one of the course tutors to scribe for her. She has also produced books and several games for her children at home.

There have also been several positive outcomes for Denise's children. She has recently accompanied her children on a school outing, the youngest child has started to use a pencil to make marks on paper and is now happy to spend time with the other children and the nursery nurse and is beginning to enjoy playing with toys.

Lorriane - Lorriane loves writing and does lots and lots of it. She wants to write the story of her life. She is very creative in her ideas particularly as to what would help her son, Martin, who is disabled and has learning difficulties. Lorriane is clear that she has literacy difficulties but does not feel confident enough to attend classes. She does not use public transport and has to walk everywhere. She was a regular attender on the course until the group became bigger. She comes to talk to us separately about the work but rarely attends the full group. Her husband who is now unemployed also now pops in to the group and has contributed songs and nursery rhymes. She has asked for one to one sessions with us to enable her to get the credits for the course.

The outcomes for Lorriane divided into two categories. Firstly she has begun to make some progress with regards to her literacy so that she now has an understanding of the concept of standard English which she calls 'book English'. She has also gained confidence in herself as a writer and has written many books and made games for her children at home. Lorriane has learned to use a word processor. In terms of her children and their needs Lorriane has understood the importance of using oral language with them and is constantly reminding herself that she must talk to them. She has also realised that she can get support in making decisions about her children's schooling from her children's existing teachers.

Sheila

Sheila has two children with her when she attends the course, Steve who is three and has a morning place at the nursery, and Sammy who is eighteen months and does not leave her mother at all. She also has an older daughter at primary school and has recently lost a baby. Both children appear to be functioning below their chronological age in terms of language, physical and social behaviour etc... Sheila attends regularly every week but the only writing she has done during the sessions is copying. At first she found ways of avoiding having to do any of the tasks in class by having to go and change the baby, having to give the baby a drink etc.... She generally takes her work

home with her and her husband types it out for her using a computer. Last week during the session Sheila told the group that she had been physically abused by her father and had spent her life, from the age of four, in care.

Outcomes Sheila:

- *Sheila is now at a point where whenever a task is given which requires any writing she picks up the baby and asks one of the tutors to write for her making sure she adds that she can't write because she has the baby in her arms*
- *Sheila is beginning to let down her defences: for the first time last week she came without the baby and started to go round the nursery making observations but soon found another baby who needed her*
- *we feel that by the end of the course Sheila will be able to say that she has some literacy difficulties but will probably still find it hard to attend classes in a formal environment*
- *Sheila is much more confident in her approach to her children*
- *Sheila takes an active interest in her children's education feeling confident enough to ask questions as she now knows she has some understanding of what happens at school. Last week she entered the room triumphantly proclaiming that her son Steve was good at maths she had been told. She was able to tell us that he can look at a dice and say what the number is without having to count up each dot.*
- *Sheila also went and asked his teacher for copies of his drawings so that she could include them in her file and proudly showed them to the group*
- *Sheila and her husband made a book at home about their baby who died*
- *Sheila is very enthusiastic about the course and takes on points made during the discussions e.g. diet*

Sheila's children have also made some progress during the last two terms, although we realise that this progress cannot be entirely attributed to their mother's participation on the course. The two year old is just beginning to show an interest in toys and to concentrate on a task for a couple of minutes and although she still does not greet other children or adults or wave goodbye she is beginning to respond socially to other adults. The three year old will now happily pick up a pencil and draw and will then present his work to his mother who will comment on it with pride.

Anyone involved in adult literacy know the outcomes are not always quantifiable and most outcomes cannot be measured in terms of success at Wordpower level 1. These three women will get LOCF units at the end of the course and these I am sure will be important demonstrations of their success but the real progress they have made cannot be measured through certification. As we saw earlier there is very little adult literacy provision in the borough and the nearest voluntary scheme has a waiting list. With more opportunities such as the ones this course provides all of these women would probably eventually be ready to attend classes in an informal, supportive environment with childcare facilities such as the one provided by the voluntary literacy schemes. These women will, even without help with their literacy, be in a better position to understand the education their children are getting and be better equipped to enter into real dialogue with their children's teachers so as to support their children through their education.

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ESOL AND STUDENT PUBLISHING

Qaisra Ahmad, Manchester Adult Education Services

I was the facilitator for a workshop session at Lifelong Literacies Conference, entitled "ESOL and student publishing." It arose from my personal interest in wanting to give an ESOL perspective on the conference sub-theme of "student publishing."

As it was a fairly short session, just under 1 1/2 hours, it was envisaged as an information gathering, dissemination and sharing of experiences. I took a number of magazines containing student writing and Naznin Monaf's book and magazine Gatehouse Voices by Gatehouse. There were altogether 10 participants from all over England, and 1 from Holland and 2 from Egypt. Most of the tutors either taught ESOL, or had dealings with second language learners.

After introductions, and Tom Woodin's brief introduction about Gatehouse and the books they publish, I provided a short personal listing of student publishing at North Hulme Centre in Manchester. We discussed the background to, the value of ESOL students' writing leading to the process of publication. I passed a number of magazines around. These were back copies of Look Here, Gatehouse Voices, and The World of Women, produced at Hulme Centre. Two participants had brought copies of magazines from their countries. The Dutch tutor had brought a number of magazines containing articles of writing by students. Similarly the Egyptian participant showed us a magazine produced in Cairo. We began to compare our experiences of producing these magazines.

The session also led to other topics being discussed. The participants were very keen to share, liaise and network with one another. The session provided them with an opportunity to air broader ESOL related issues i.e. Accreditation.

The magazine The World of Women was discussed at length. It arose from a workshop aimed at developing ESOL students spoken and writing skills. It contains articles of writing by 12 ESOL women students from all over the world, on a number of topics, i.e. Honour, Superstition, Remarriage, Divorce, Religion, etc.

We discussed the mechanics of producing the magazine, the sheer hard work. It took us a good 4 - 5 months to produce. Discussions, drafting, redrafting, typing, proof-reading, editing, sorting out layouts and typefaces etc. were some of the tasks. More importantly it was a challenge meeting deadlines. Its launch was to coincide with the international women's week event, where these women were to read out their articles to the general public. We did it all at the end!

It is one thing having a lively, deliciously interesting discussion! It is totally another matter, trying to get the students to transfer those thoughts onto a piece of paper, especially as it is their second language. Some of the students did it fairly willingly and with very little language support. Others had to be cajoled, and individually supported, almost word for word, sentence by sentence. Taping of our discussions is something I

would consider in the future. Often you miss the thread of your thoughts when you try to remember discussions.

Re-writing the articles improved their knowledge of usage of English and especially spelling. The last two weeks were a nightmare, when all the articles were being type-set, faced, proof-read, word processed, and the cover was being designed and finally the whole magazine sent to the printers.

As it was my first time I hadn't taken into consideration how the whole thing was going to be bound - stapled or ring-bound, and where? and how? You just miraculously expect it to be done by the person printing it. Also, because the articles were rearranged by topics, we missed the page numbers! It definitely won't happen next time.

After all that, the magazine has proved very popular with everyone. It was sent abroad - including to Benazir Bhutto, who I met recently in Pakistan, and to all the ESOL departments of MAES and managers. It was discovered by Eve's Back, a Manchester-based magazine. They liked it very much and decided to print and serialise the articles month by month, topic by topic. They interviewed me and then printed 3 of the articles on the topic of Honour.

I-am delighted for my students. It is an achievement indeed, from a struggle to put pen to paper in a foreign language, to getting their articles published in 2 magazines. One a national one!

If interested, copies of this magazine are available from Qaisra Ahmad, Hulme Centre, Hulme Walk, Manchester M15 5FQ

Qaisra Ahmad

The Gatehouse Asian women's project

Gatehouse's main purpose is to publish books written by and for adults with reading and writing difficulties. These people are not a cohesive group but comprise a myriad of differences. Gatehouse has a publishing policy of targeting groups less well represented in print.

In the early 1990's Gatehouse identified Asian women (from the Indian Sub-Continent) as a possible target group. Asian women are not well represented in student publishing and the perception at the time was that there was a need for beginner reader books written by Asian women. Helen Sunderland's research for the Language and Literacy Unit into the materials needs of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes confirmed this need.

Patricia Duffin did some research into whether this project would indeed be feasible. It was decided to develop a three year project with a new project worker and two temporary workers, who might work with different Asian communities. This has involved considerable fundraising which is nearing completion, thanks to Manchester City Council, The Barrow Cadbury Trust, The National Lottery Charities Board, and The Save and Prosper Educational Trust.

However, even before this funding was secured Gatehouse began to develop publishing work with Asian women. When a group of student writers selected Naznin Monaf's *New Home, Hard Work* Gatehouse took up the process of publishing it with great enthusiasm. The book is about Naznin's experiences of coming to England from Bangladesh as a sixteen year old. A cassette was produced to accompany the cassette. Both are proving to be extremely popular.

The Gatehouse project has a number of aims:

- To research the specific needs for student publishing within ESOL. The needs of different Asian communities will be considered.
- To publish six beginner reader books. We also hope to be able to produce cassettes to accompany these books.
- To consider how ESOL groups can incorporate publishing into their own practice.
- To disseminate the books and the results of this project nationally.

Qaisra Ahmad's workshop (see previous paper), based on her experiences of publishing writing by ESOL students, provided a valuable forum in which to discuss some of the issues this project will face and was an opportunity for Gatehouse to make some new contacts.

In particular people who came to the workshop focused on two issues. The first was the reason why there had been so little student publishing within ESOL. People were surprised that groups like Gatehouse had not developed sustained work with Asian communities (until now). Others pointed out that ESOL had had to work hard to gain separate recognition from adult basic education in the early days when ESOL students were often lumped in with basic education students. For this reason people in ESOL were not enthusiastic in adopting student publishing which was widely associated with adult basic education at the time.

The other issue discussed in the workshop was how far a student's writing needs to be 'corrected' rather than leaving a students writing in their 'own' language, something that would happen much more easily with an ABE student. People felt that there needs to be openness and honesty in working with both writers and readers so that they understand this language issue fully. This issue will be one central to the development of the project.

We would like to hear from you if you are interested in this work. Gatehouse aims to bring together a range of people in developing this work and to make a contribution to the production of ESOL materials and the teaching of ESOL in this teaching. We can be contacted at Gatehouse, Hulme Adult Education Centre, Hulme Walk, Manchester M15 5FQ 0161 226 7152.

Tom Woodin

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO VOCATIONAL LITERACY

Audrey Stewart

The style of teaching and content of the literacy learning programme are positioned in the dominant social ideology of the times. If this is recognised, then the student's agenda can be more fully met and practitioners can more easily identify their own training and development needs.

In order to contextualise the issues, it is useful to first explore how the current position has been reached.

LITERACY FOR CHANGE

Twenty years ago, adult literacy work was based upon certain assumptions:

- the education system was constructed in such a way that there would be winners and losers
- those losers, as adults, suffered low self-esteem as a result of low literacy skills
- a literacy programme should involve a "comprehensive re-socialisation" (Jane Mace, 1979, Working With Words)

The highly confidential, one-to-one or supportive group was based on the philosophy of "helping" the individual to develop skills in such a way and in such contexts that would give value to the student's life and affirm their experiences.

LITERACY FOR COPING

Through the 1980s researchers and practitioners explored in more detail the motivations of students who came forward to develop their literacy skills.

Ken Levine (Becoming Literate 1980) suggested that many people did not necessarily experience this sense of low self-esteem but recognised that their skills were simply not adequate for the changes that affected their lives such as job change, unemployment, or changes to personal circumstances.

Being in a different social context, the literacy programme took on different features:

- the approach became a more functional one that enabled the student to respond and cope with changes
- the learning situation became more open - in colleges, training centres or community centres. Learning took place beside other people who were developing other aspects of their education
- the suggestion was openly stated, through publicity, that there were certain areas of literacy that people could reliably expect to need help with - letter writing, form-filling etc.

The practice of being a literacy teacher required skills and it was during this period that there was extensive professionalisation of Basic Education with extensive staff training and qualifications to do the job were emerging.

It was clear, that a low level of literacy left people seriously disadvantaged when faced with change but also, in a society where change was happening very quickly, there would be serious social consequences if people were not equipped to adapt. It was no longer appropriate that young people were leaving school with low literacy skills

LITERACY TO COMPETE

Economic competitiveness is undoubtedly the dominant ideology of the 1990s. People with low literacy skills are hugely disadvantaged in their ability to find and keep work and where there is not full employment, it is easy for such people to become marginalised and disillusioned by employment itself.

At the same time, the use of literacy skills is becoming far more complex as society develops a whole range of literacies. For young people, vocationally-related literacy skills are essential to enable them to participate in employment and any literacy programme geared towards young people should recognise this. The ability to use literacy skills in a flexible way, anticipating a possible number of changes in employment requires a literacy programme that enables a greater understanding to be developed of how we can use literacy skills to achieve certain ends rather than being narrowly and instrumentally focused. Any programme of vocational literacy will need to be working at a number of levels:

- sub-skills (such as spelling, punctuation etc.) are still important and need to be developed in the context of their use.
- there must be a clear recognition of the purposeful nature of most literacy-related activities and a greater emphasis drawn to the interactive nature of literacy use. The impact on the receiver of a communication is an important factor in a decision on the effectiveness of the communication act
- explicit consideration of the interaction between form and content further draws attention to this. For example, a letter of job application will not be effective if written in pencil and on a piece of A4 lined paper. This may seem obvious but is often left out of the process at tutor-student level on the assumption that the student will know. This assumption is not borne out by experience.
- the student needs to be aware that different vocational areas adopt different conventions of style

All the above has great implication and puts considerable demand on the awareness and expertise of the literacy teacher. Staffing arrangements and training programmes should be reflecting the complexity of the role. Literacy teaching is becoming more fragmented but can be bound together and the connections made through the knowledge and understanding of the tutor. If the tutor's knowledge is only narrowly located then the fragmentation will continue and literacy awareness and use will be more easily used as a form of power distinction in a competitive context.

A good literacy programme still needs to be relevant, it needs to be negotiated, it needs to be imbued with all the qualities of best practice developed over the last twenty years. In addition, however, the competitive context for many of our communication acts (particularly in the work and employment arenas), needs to be acknowledged. This would enable people to not only participate more effectively but would make evident to them the context of their actions. It is only full awareness that enables us to maintain any control at all and not be always simply re-acting to the communication acts of others.

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Finding a way in: back door routes to learning

Jo Colley, New College Durham 1996

Introduction

This paper was written as an attempt to explore the difficulties experienced by some sections of the population in accessing further and higher education. Recent research by NIACE and others (see references) show that barriers to access persist, and suggest that more imaginative approaches to overcoming these barriers may be required. Our experience of working with a variety of under-represented groups in County Durham gave us the opportunity to offer an alternative way in to education which would convince college management that outreach work was not only worthwhile per se but also a stage in a clear progression route.

The New College Durham Return to Study Programme

Durham is a large county, consisting mainly of villages or small towns which, having developed alongside the mining industry, are now characterised by high unemployment figures and attendant social problems. Durham City, boasting a university with high academic standards and a famous cathedral, sits rather incongruously amid the rest of the county. Perhaps an educational "us" and "them" mentality is heightened by this clear cultural divide. The Learning Services team at New College were aware that more could be done for under represented groups like those described by NIACE. The College is both a further and higher education college, set on two sites, outside of the city centre. Although accessible for some areas of the town, people living to the north and east of the city, or in any of the outlying villages, have to travel considerable distances at considerable expense. That's if they've even heard of us in the first place. Although the college marketing team works hard to present the college as a friendly, accessible place, management information services statistics made it clear that we were not reaching the parts that probably nobody else was reaching either.

Access to education can happen from any area of the curriculum. An interest in cookery or car maintenance may lead a learner into a more formal programme (with accreditation!), as any community education worker knows. The Basic Skills team felt that they knew as much, if not more about access and barriers to learning as the next curriculum area: people accessing basic skills help in college often have to overcome a range of barriers, both practical and personal. We decided we needed to develop some "back door" routes to learning.

Help Your Child in School

The intergenerational effects of literacy are now well documented. Similarly, it is a commonplace that adults with basic skills needs are often triggered to seek help when their children reach school age, because they want to be able to support their children's learning. With this in mind, and arising from the interest generated from the Read and Write Together initiative from the BSA, we developed a short course entitled **Help Your Child in School.** We offered this course, free of charge, to schools, libraries and community centres in the Durham area, targeting particularly the under represented areas of both the city and the county.

The course proved very successful: more than 100 parents have taken part in the course since January 1995. These figures could have been doubled had we not been working within a limited budget.

Waddington Street Day Centre: Working with the Recovering Mentally Ill

People who have had a mental illness often suffer from a crisis of confidence in terms of studying or training. Some people with mental illness also have a prison record, are long-term unemployed, and may also have a need to improve their basic skills. Accessing education in the traditional ways may prove too big a barrier in these cases. To counteract this, we set up a basic skills group at a day centre in the city which supported people who were in recovery from mental illness. For some, the goal of attending college and taking a mainstream course is a

distant one. For others, the basic skills group was a stepping stone to further education, and to achieving the kinds of qualifications they had previously considered out of reach.

Overcoming Cultural and Language Barriers: ESOL Community

Durham as a county has low numbers of linguistic minority residents (1% of total population). However, Durham City has many medium term residents from overseas, due to the university, and the influx of workers from Japan and Korea. Many workers or students bring wives and family to the city, who may feel very isolated. Also, for many, further education goals have to take second place to family commitments. The need for an English language class for parents emerged. St Nicholas Church in the city centre provided a hall and a crèche, staffed by volunteers and parents, was established. The learners to this group represent both long and short term residents. All learners are encouraged to join further English language classes at the college as part of their progression.

Taking it Further

At the end of each short course, further opportunities were presented to the learners via a visit to the college, which included a talk from one of our careers guidance workers. An opportunity to make a personal appointment with careers was offered, as was an appointment with a specialist advice worker on benefits, grants etc. It also included a tour around our Learning Support Centre, which shares space with ABE /ESOL. This was important for our learners, who were able to feel confident that any further study they attempted could actually take place in the centre, or would be supported by it, possibly even with a tutor they knew and had already worked with. Learners were made aware of crèche facilities, and the special facilities available for those with disabilities.

Return to Study: Bridging the Gap

For many learners, there was still a need for extra encouragement and confidence building before the next step could be made. This was true of the parents, who having recovered some self-esteem from a course which celebrated their abilities as their children's teachers, now had to overcome personal learning barriers erected years before, at school, at work, in society at large which tends to rate us for our consequential rather than intrinsic value. Somehow, seeking learning **for yourself** seemed more difficult to justify. Learners who were considering the college Access to Higher Education course felt they needed to try out a range of study skills as a kind of life raft before being thrown in at the deep end. Learners still in recovery from mental illness felt even more strongly that they would be unable to cope in a group situation with people who were "normal".

The **Crossroads** course consists of 6 x two hour sessions, which can be held in college or in the community base, covering both study skills and personal development. By the end of the course, these skills have been practised:

- writing a personal assignment, describing your life history and future aspirations
- researching a social issue and taking notes
- presenting the researched issue as part of a group presentation

This comprehensive range of tasks is facilitated by the group sessions, which encourages pair and group work and works to build an atmosphere of trust and safety. Techniques such as guided visualisations and reading and responding to poetry are used in the process of learning to identify and value personal skills and qualities. By the final session, learners find they have been guided through the tasks seemingly effortlessly by their tutor, their peers and their enhanced sense of their own abilities. They are now more able to make choices on future learning, based on what they now know they can achieve, rather than a perception of their abilities based on a negative previous learning experience. In addition, the tutor will have evidence from the tasks which enable her / him to advise and suggest possibilities which are

realistic and achievable. The security of on-going learning support for future choices is a bonus to non-traditional learners, who also require structured and visible learning routes.

Two case studies

Hazel left school with few qualifications, and worked in an office until her first child was born. As a parent of two small children, with an unemployed husband, she now works as a dinner lady at the local school. When a **Help Your Child in School** course was offered at her youngest child's nursery school, she decided to give it a try. This initial step was the beginning of her realisation that she was capable of studying at a higher level than she had previously believed. She chose to come to college on the **Crossroads** course, and her confidence in her own abilities continued to grow. She has now enrolled on the Access to Higher Education programme, with the long term goal of becoming a primary school teacher. The knowledge that support will be available to her as she continues to study is an added security.

With a history of mental illness, alcohol abuse and spells in prison, **George** had little faith in the notion of education as a way out of the complexities of his life. He accessed the **Crossroads** course via Waddington Street, wrote a stunning first assignment on his personal history and took an active part in group work. His acceptance by the group and the supportive atmosphere of the course have helped him to consider further education, via the Access programme, as a next step, although he may decide to brush up his study skills and IT competence before moving on.

Conclusion

Institutions such as Further and Higher Education Colleges are aware that certain groups fail to access their provision. As the current evidence to the Kennedy Committee seems to show, participation in education continues to be restricted. At the same time:

"...the need to mobilise the potential for learning in the population as a whole has never been greater - for the individual facing increasingly complex domestic, financial and health decisions, for an economy aspiring to be highly skilled and 'knowledge-based', for a society wishing to devolve power and decision making to ever more localised levels." (NIACE, 1996)

The establishment of a Widening Participation Committee suggests a commitment to the inclusion of all social groups in a Learning Society. Facilitating participation requires a different approach, which can often seem time-consuming and expensive for providers. The programme offered by New College was successful enough to convince management that the FEFC funding methodology could be used to support institutions who target non-traditional learners. Furthermore, non-traditional learners can evolve into participants in traditional paths, once they have "got the bug" , in the words of one of the **Crossroads** course members.

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The Politics of Workplace Literacy

Fiona Frank and Chris Holland

Fiona Frank is Research Associate at CSET (Centre for the Study of Education and Training), Lancaster University. Chris Holland is a New Zealand Workplace Basic Skills Consultant currently based at CSET.

The issues which we begin to explore in this paper are ones which we have been thinking about for several years, while working in both the theoretical and the practical sides of workplace basic skills training. The aim of the paper is to address the political issue of whether there is more to *workplace* basic skills training programmes than just an extra way of making money and reaching new markets.

Workplace literacy is much more of a recognised field of academic study in the United States and in Australia than in the UK; and Peter O'Connor (Australia), Sheryl Gowen (US) and Glenda Hull (US) among others have looked in detail at these and other issues. (O'Connor, 1993; Gowen, 1992, Hull, 1993). In the UK, Jane Mace has reflected in writing on workplace projects she has initiated (Mace, 1987, Mace & Yarnit, 1987). One of us was involved in a Leverhulme Trust funded research project looking at the development of workplace basic skills programmes, at Case Studies of some programmes in the North West of England, and at employers' attitudes to these programmes (Frank & Hamilton 1993, Frank 1992). More recently Keith Forrester, John Payne and Kevin Ward have addressed the issue within their report on Employee Development schemes (Forrester et al, 1995).[1] The 'how to' of workplace literacy has been addressed in the UK by Workbase (ALBSU/Workbase Training 1990) and by the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC 1990). But as practitioners we have in the UK up to now mostly tended to go into this work with little explicit discussion of the *theories* and of the *politics* of the work we are doing.

This paper gives us a chance to raise some of the key questions which we feel should be addressed by Basic Skills tutors and managers before embarking on Workplace projects. Space does not allow us to address all the questions in full here, but we put them forward as the agenda for further discussion elsewhere.

Some key issues include:

Benefits of literacy provision in the workplace: Who benefits and in what ways? Who are we catering for?

Responsibility: Who sets the agenda which says that literacy levels in companies needs to be raised?

Doing Good: Why are we involved in workplace education?

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[1] These writings are currently being drawn together by Chris Holland in an International Literature Review on Workplace Literacy (Holland, in press).

These questions are all linked. We need to look at our own motivation for being involved with workplace education before we can answer the question of who we feel we are catering for. Only then can we design a programme which sits comfortably with our own philosophy and which we can defend as accomplishing the aims which we have set out to achieve. Decisions to be made on all programmes such as

who pays? who attends? whose time? whose curriculum? how long or short-term?

are all functions of whose interests are uppermost in the overall management of a project.

None of the questions listed above has a 'given' answer. The thesis of this paper is that taking basic skills into the workplace situates us politically whether we like it or not: and if we do not spend some time considering these issues within our 'education' setting before taking our ABE model into the workplace, we may unwittingly be agents in an exercise which only amounts to "re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic." (Lankshear, 1993)

In the Leverhulme Trust funded research mentioned above, Frank & Hamilton (op cit) began to realise that the answers to some of these questions depended on the amount of power in the hands of the various 'actors' involved in a workplace basic skills training programme, and tried to draw this together in a diagram on a single A4 sheet which is enclosed as an annex to this paper. (The 'actors' around the top of the circle are the decision-makers, and the segment at the bottom of the diagram includes those areas of the programme where decisions have to be made.)

Doing Good: Why are *we* involved in workplace education?

Does it provide a lucrative form of additional funding? - an interesting new project giving us kudos in the 'widening participation'/'range and responsiveness' stakes of the new FEFC discourse? Does it make us feel good to help people without skills to achieve them and so progress in the workplace and society? Do we want to empower people to understand and transform their own society? Or do some of us see our new client group as incapable of organising their own lives, nor of running homes, gardens, etc, until we come riding over the hill and into their lives triumphantly waving the new key of Literacy with which they can transform themselves into new, 'whole' people? The curriculum we provide, and the decisions we make about our programme, would be different in every case.

Sheryl Gowen, whose very full case study of a workplace basic skills programme in a hospital in the US, 'King Memorial', is laid out in a publication from which this paper takes its name (Gowen 1992) outlines the motivations held by two of the practitioners involved in the programme which may help to situate the reader.

Margaret', the main curriculum consultant for the programme, holds the view that literacy can move workers onwards and upwards.

> *"Margaret is ... convinced of literacy's power to transform workers..... she thinks of enhancing literacy skills on the job as a way to help others realize their potential for advancement. Improving job performance by improving basic skills is directly tied to "making it" in the system. ... like management, Margaret believes in a causal link between acceptable levels of literacy, job performance, and job advancement. [she sees] literacy [as] the missing link in a chain of success and opportunity for both employer and employee.*

'Aisha', the Black woman recruited as tutor for the programme, has a very different perspective on the role of a workplace literacy scheme: and one which puts her in a situation of potential conflict with the curriculum consultants:

> *"as a social activist with a background of self-help models and Freirean study groups, Aisha believes that the system needs to be changed. She sees the goal of workplace literacy instruction as empowerment through the development of a critical consciousness in order to change the current social, political, and economic system."*

Gowen, op cit

It is only after situating ourselves as 'Margarets' or 'Aishas' that we can decide on a curriculum which provides part of the means towards worker empowerment, or one which offers a narrow, functionalist series of competencies to workers to enable them better to fit their current situation, and better to adapt to any future situation as member of a 'flexible' workforce with easily transferable skills.

Responsibility: Who sets the agenda which says that literacy levels in companies needs to be raised?

Do we see the increased interest in workplace literacy as resulting from "*1. changing economic and workplace demands and 2. people moving in and out of competency during their lifetime and need[ing] an opportunity to catch up*"" (Lankshear, 1993) or do we see our role as trying to meet the deficit created by individual learning problems and inadequate schooling?

In the 'Deficit Model' it is suggested that it is the workers' fault that companies are losing many thousands of pounds per year due to inaccurate work. Reports such as ALBSU's 'The Cost to Industry' (1993) and give easily quotable (and widely quoted) figures like "Summary of total cost to industry of poor basic skills for companies employing 51 or more persons: £4,828 million." (ALBSU, op.cit).

This type of model is 'bought' easily by company management. The type of expectation of a literacy programme held by the King Memorial management, for example, fits easily with this model, and is outlined below by Sheryl Gowen:

> *[The management] wants entry-level employees to follow directions with consistency and a minimum of discussion or oral feedback. They believe that literacy training will make workers more quiet; less reliant on oral, face-to-face communication; and more reliant on text, especially the text created and*

disseminated by management. Being more reliant on text will in turn make employees more productive and efficient. ... Underlying these requirements is a closely held belief in the power of literacy to control employee behaviour. Management at King Memorial presumes that literate workers will be more productive, more responsive to directions, and more predictable in their behaviour

Gowen, op cit

In contrast Peter O-Connor (O'Connor, op cit) refers to the work of Turk, and Gribble, when he reminds us that literacy does not *cause* unemployment, labour accidents, poverty, low productivity and lack of competitiveness: and therefore cannot be put forward as a cure for those modern industrial ills.

In setting our objectives we need to avoid the temptation to be drawn into the popular discourse of individual workers' deficits as the source of economic problems, workplace inefficiencies or low productivity. We need to avoid the false promises that rest on workplace literacy programs solving these and myriad other problems (perceived or real).

O'Connor, op.cit.

Benefits of literacy provision in the workplace: Who benefits and in what ways? Who are we catering for?

Having considered the other issues above, we may be in a better position to answer these questions. We need to know what our college wants from us. We may know what we ourselves hope to gain from a successful programme. It is important to be aware of what the employer hopes to gain from the programme. But equally essential is to be aware of our students' expectations of the programme.

Do we know anything about the workers' lives, in and out of the workplace, and acknowledge the skills they already possess? Glenda Hull and Sheryl Gowen both talk about reasons for listening carefully to our students:

"We need ... to seek out the personal stories of workers..., and to learn what it is like to take part in a vocational programme or a literacy class and what effect such an experience has, really, on work and living. We need to look with a critical eye at how work gets accomplished and to examine what roles literacy has within work and what relationships exist between skills at work and rights of workers.

Hull, 1993, quoted in O'Connor, op cit

"these employees value and respect the power of text and literacy, but not for learning how to dust or mop. ... The same men and women who are characterised as 'confused' or 'unorganised' run catering services, repair cars and small appliances, provide child care for pay, direct youth programmes at

their churches, and organise their communities to provide services for the homeless."

Gowen, op cit

A workplace literacy programme can be designed which takes account of all these perspectives. We would agree with Sheryl Gowen's recommendation, echoed in the work of Paul Jurmo, for a

participatory model of workplace education.... inviting all stakeholders to the table to mutually determine both the problem and its possible solutions... ...A participatory model ... calls upon the literacy educator to abandon notions of deficit and to search instead for the abilities already constituted in workers but often unrecognised by institutions or assessment measures.

Gowen, op cit

The workers with the lowest education levels currently access the least workplace training (Training Agency 1989, McGivney 1990). We (as basic skills practitioners committed to student-centred learning) have a role in redressing this balance. But if we are to continue to see our students as 'whole people', through the keyholes of task analysis-based curricula, competence based programmes, and FEFC imperatives, we need to find a new way to market the courses to industry rather than use the 'deficit model' as an easy marketing tool.

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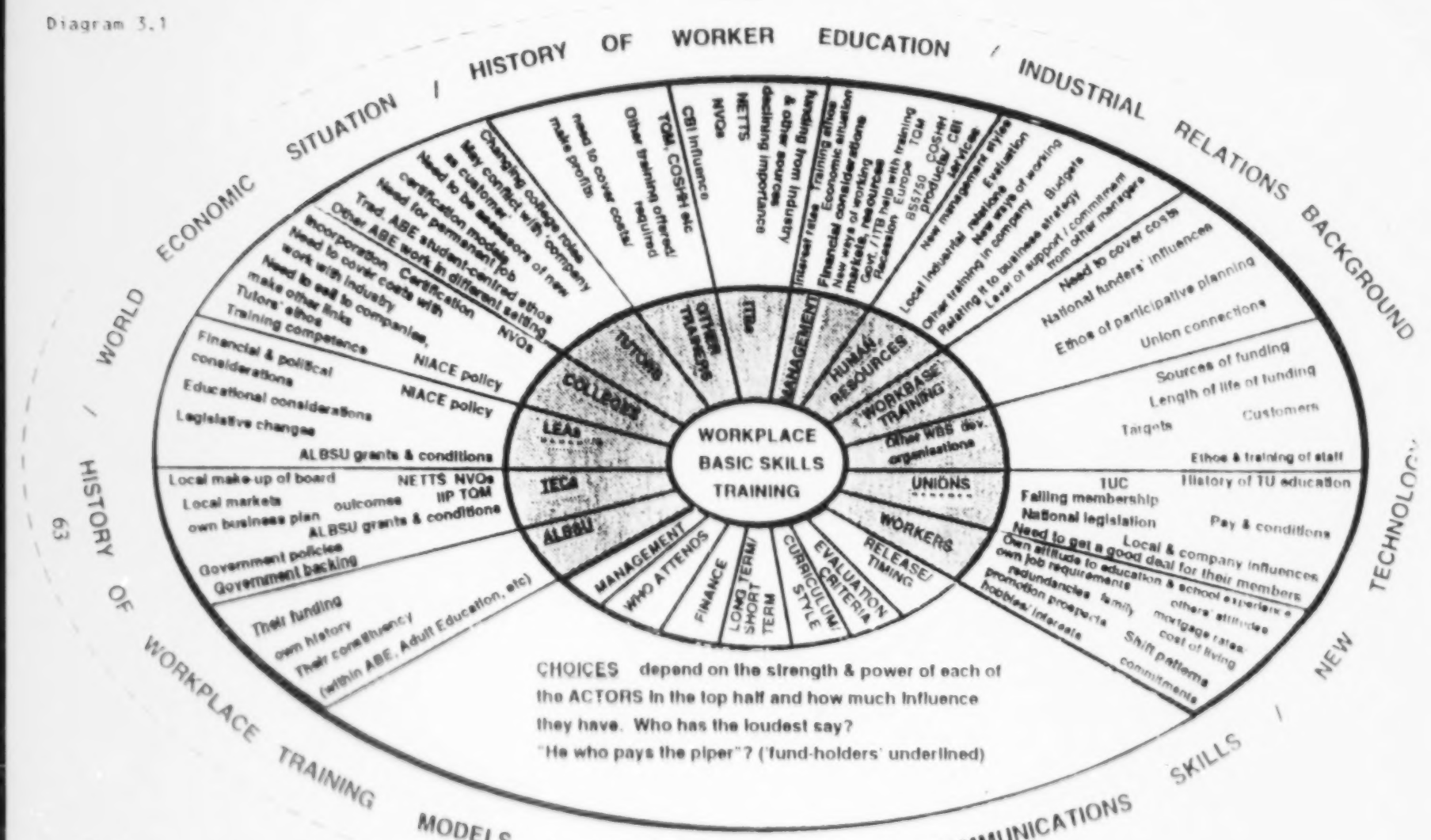
Diagram 3.1



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WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS TRAINING: A "MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS" MODEL

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"My student spends all her time telling me her problems" -

LISTENING AND TEACHING IN BASIC EDUCATION

Alison Noel

INTRODUCTION

This article was originally written as a basis for a training slot or handout for tutors on City and Guilds Basic Skills Initial Teaching Certificates. I decided to write it because as a relative newcomer into Adult Basic Skills I was interested to unpack how our student-centred approach appeared to be a powerful tool towards helping students to overcome emotional barriers to learning. I looked at this issue from the perspective of some years of counselling experience and thought that it would be helpful to explain why painful feelings block learning; how tutors could further develop skills to assist the learning process, and to give guidance for handling what could sometimes feel like embarrassing and worrying situations. I am coming more and more to think that distress of one sort or another is at the heart of most people's problems with learning. In the discussion during the workshop I gave on this at the conference it became clear that this theory appeared to reflect the experience of the people in the group. What follows, then, is a combination of the earlier writing and some of the issues we discussed in the workshop.

COUNSELLING SKILLS AND ABE

Basic Education is not a counselling service but tutors do use skills that could be called counselling skills. (See footnote 1) Listening skills are one example. In the early stages of contact with a basic skills student, tutors may find that the student needs to talk about his/her problems, and that this process can seem to help students to learn.

Even when young people have slipped through the educational net for what seems like purely practical reasons like illness or lack of support from their parents, it's likely that as an adult they will have become embarrassed about this weak area and may have carried some shame through to their adult life.

Pre-school experiences of learning can set the pattern for the future, - think of the toddler whose impulse to learn makes the child want to find out about something by touching it and gets "No" with a smack as a result. This sort of experience can snuff out a child's natural impulse to learn about the world at a very early age. Other young people may have been scarred by their schooling through criticism or insensitivity and come to associate learning with anxiety and discomfort.

Later in life, when a person with these past experiences decides to join a Basic Skills class, a flood of old anxieties and fears may be triggered by the classroom environment. Anxiety, fear of failure, shame, panic, in fact any feeling of distress, has the effect of making the mind confused and forgetful, and clear thinking is difficult. So these re-stimulated feelings of failure themselves become the barrier to learning.

Adult basic education methods enable students to have good and supportive attention, with a lower student/tutor ratio than would have been experienced at school. It's quite rare for any of us to receive really good attention from someone else and when we are listened to with respect it's a powerful experience. Talking may help students to release their fear, and recover some of their natural intelligence and ability to learn.

GUIDELINES FOR TUTORS

In the workshop we discussed the question of boundaries in the tutor-student relationship. As I explained, I thought it useful in tutor training to provide some guidelines for ABE tutors in how they can best deal with student distress. The guidelines I use are as follows:

BOUNDARIES

It's important to preserve boundaries within what is, first and foremost, an educational activity. It's helpful to be accepting when students show their feelings, especially in early sessions; there needs to be some space in our teaching for this natural healing which enables learning. As tutors we aren't qualified to deal with deep distress and it may occasionally be helpful to suggest alternative support for the student. An up-to-date list of local counselling services is useful.

Sometimes tutors may feel the need to talk about a particular student to get some clarity on a situation. In this situation a tutor should be able to get support from the coordinator, but personal information should not be disclosed, (see *confidentiality* below)

GUIDING STUDENTS OUT OF THEIR DISTRESS

It's possible to stay in control of the situation, for example, by allowing the student to talk about his or her problems for a while, but then to shift the attention back to the work in hand. It would be appropriate to say quite simply, "perhaps we should get back to the writing now".

REMEMBERING WHOSE PROBLEM IT IS

The tutor needs to remain clear that whatever problems come up, these belong to the student. It's not our role to solve a student's personal problems, and in fact it's not at all helpful to take over any responsibility for a student's life. The tutor should avoid giving advice or making suggestions to the student about their personal life, except to give information, eg where to look for jobs. Support and encouragement will do wonders for low self-esteem; an example would be to say, "I am sure that you are going to be able to decide what to do....." Following this guideline will help avoid a dependent relationship between student and tutor.

The Basic Skills process is set up to empower students, for example in negotiating a learning plan a tutor facilitates, but it's the student who makes the decisions and takes responsibility for the learning.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality must be respected. Personal issues brought up in the teaching situation should not be referred to by a tutor when speaking to other members of staff, or the tutor's family or friends, except with the express permission of the student.

CONCLUSION

Over a period of time I have come to believe that the process of enabling people to overcome learning blocks is actually more valuable than the specific skills that they acquire, even foundational literacy skills.

I spoke at the workshop about one of my students who couldn't manage certain numeracy and literacy tasks at work. He shook and blanked out in classes; his mother had convinced him that he was stupid. I kept reminding him of all the things he could do which took great skill, like reading and driving, and I told him over and over again, "You can do it". His boss was amazed at the change in his attitude to work and his rise in confidence over the period. All the staff were reapplying for their jobs at the time and, because of his change in attitude, he managed to hold on to his job even though we hadn't yet solved all the literacy and numeracy problems.

I also related the comment of a union rep at a Basic Skills at Work steering group. He observed that the students in the pilot seemed to feel better about themselves, asked more questions, and took more interest in what was going on at work.

Emotional barriers to learning can drastically limit people's lives. To help in the breakthrough can be exciting - there's no telling what someone may go on to do.

footnote

(1) see **RaPAL bulletin: special issue on counselling** (Spring 1993) for further discussion on this topic.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT WRITING

Jane Mace

PUBLISHING IS MORE THAN BOOKS

'Publishing' writing, in adult literacy education, comes in many forms. The word itself, however, has rather limited associations. It implies *books*: the finished, bound, solid-looking object and the appearance of something complete. And books, published by commercial publishing houses, sold in bookshops or on loan from libraries, even in the age of electronic technologies, carry authority. As we hold them in our hands, turn the pages and peruse them in silence, we feel their weight.

Adult literacy educators see publishing in different terms. The activity, as embodied by both RaPAL and Gatehouse themselves, is about a social process, as much, if not more than, about products; and the book is by no means the only form which that activity may take (some chapters in Mace (1995) say more about this. Look out for pieces on writing and publishing in back issues of RaPAL bulletin, too: e.g. no.3, Spring 1987, no.7, Autumn 1988, and no.19, Autumn 1992). One word which summarises this process best, in my view, is that of *experiment*. Students, persuaded by tutors, are invited to engage in the experimental (and therefore both exciting and risky) work of trying something for themselves: experimenting with the medium of writing, and trying out a range of ways in which they may share their own with others. When Rebecca O'Rourke and I spent a year finding out what the range and effect of this activity might be, five years ago, we arrived at six different 'models' of this activity which we found in the practice of adult literacy education around this country (O'Rourke and Mace, 1992). The picture we found is summarised in the grid on the next page - and in the conference workshop we discussed what experience and observation we could contribute to these.

LIFE WITHOUT STUDENT PUBLISHING

Such a process, it is clear, requires an investment of time, skills and resources: and there is a widespread feeling abroad in the world of adult basic education that such an investment is ever harder to make. There is a view that the staffing and timetabling work this kind of work takes is a luxury, compared to the essentials of getting more important work done. So it seems a good time to stop and ask a couple of questions. The first is -

> What might adult literacy education be like now, if there was no published writing by any of its students?

and the second:

> What difference would it have made to teaching and learning in ABE now if adult literacy education in this country, over the last two decades and more, had indeed focussed exclusively on 'right', originally asserted in the mid-1970s, to 'read'?

Questions of this kind, which turn inside out a *consensual idea*, can help us re-state what may appear to be an obvious and shared set of values - precisely at a time when such values appear, in their turn, to be being subordinated to other forces. By 'consensual idea' I mean one which a given group of people would accept, by consensus, as one to which they could all unhesitatingly feel committed. The two questions I posed are based on my assumption

SOME MODELS OF STUDENT PUBLISHING IN ABE

Publishing as...	(readers)	(form)	(message)
writer's achievement	- class - friends	* booklet * wall display * reading evening	- we can do it
group project	- beyond Centre - local/national ABE	* magazine/book * publishing event	- you are not alone - this is worth reading
souvenir	- participants in the event - others in Centre/class	* photocopied booklet	- this is what we did - we had a good time
promotion for the organisation	- others in Centre/class - local funders - local residents	* annual report * magazine * leaflet	- this Centre does useful work - we have a right to learn
internal circular	- all students and tutors in Centre	* magazine * newsletter (regular)	- you are part of this - look what we've done
literary production	- inside and beyond ABE	* durable: book or anthology	- this is a piece of writing in its own right

(Jane Mace/Rebecca O'Rourke, 1992)

that participants in the conference (and readers of this publication) regard 'student publishing' as such an idea. Rightly or wrongly, I am assuming that you and I, by and large, all agree that it is a Good Thing; and that it is an idea which, against other pressures, and in all kinds of contexts, we believe is central to the way in which we set about our work in adult literacy education.

Well: before exploring the questions I have posed, we have to re-state the large variety of activity we intend under the term 'student publishing', as I did at the start, and be clear that we are aware of a spectrum of educational work within it. We also have to check what we mean by 'students' - remembering that, outside the world of adult basic education, the adult literacy student still remains a strange (and often stereotyped) creature. The women and men who join classes in adult and further education settings designed to improve their basic skills are, of course, a whole variety of people, who, only for a few hours a week share the definition of them as 'students' given to them by the college or adult education service. For the rest of the week they live other identities.

THE STUDENT IS MANY PEOPLE

If we are fully to appreciate the educational and personal significance of 'publishing' as a process, it is important to recall just how complex the range of these cultural and imaginative identities might be. 'A day in the life' of any one person who (on a Wednesday evening, say) is an ABE student, includes many layers of roles and experiences which add up to the person who comes to class. The very action of waking from sleep for this person, for example, means a transition from dream to reality. Once awake, there are matters of household relationships to deal with - and other people's needs to care for. Leaving home means entering the street, the school, the workplace, the shop: with transactions to make as both consumers and producers. There are phone calls to make; there are voices to listen to. There is the media around: the radio, television, music. All day long this person is thinking, talking, listening, imagining, remembering, planning, and observing.

Students, then, are also citizens, parents, consumers, dreamers, patients, and other things as well. Add to this identities of age, gender, culture. They may be temporarily or permanently disabled; employed, or not. 'Lifelong' literacy education, too, holds out a promise to the eighty-year-old as well as to her great-grandchild. In short, the adult literacy student comes in every shape and size, with variations of experience, emotional life, and social and political identity.

So what would adult literacy education feel like if there was no process which engaged its participants in expressing something of this wealth of experience and identity? what would it be like if the focus remained on a curriculum entirely focussed on reading other people's writing?

In discussion at the conference we came up with four key answers:

1. Classrooms of students would learn that literacy is about other people's power.
2. They would gain skills in reading texts (published by commercial publishers, of the media as well as of books) of a range of complexity and interest, but with a continuing sense that the authors of any texts in any public arena are 'other people';
3. Such writing as they would do would be confined to the writing of reaction - that is, they would be reacting to the demands which others put on them (whether the formal

requirements of accurately answering questions on printed forms, or the 'proper' way to reply to letters, write C.Vs, and so on).

4. Without student publishing activity, of any kind, many (but maybe not all) adult literacy students would hold on to their own *'consensual idea'*: that what they have arrived with is a deficit in their own intellectual and expressive abilities; and that it is, as they always knew it was, their own fault that they cannot write properly.
5. Without any kind of experience of a process of publishing, students would remain confirmed in the sense that literacy was about only a small part of themselves. They would remain clear that literacy means schooling, and *being literate* is only about *being schooled*.

If we turn all these negatives back into a positive statement, it seems that the significance of student publishing is that it engages students as whole people, with complex lives; it recognises their capacity not merely to consume, but to produce; not only to receive culture but to make it. In so doing, student publishing is significant because it allows 'the wealth of this great thing called education' (Lothian Community Education 1992) to be the property of the people. It is about democratising learning: and it is about gaining a mobility in the dynamic relationships of reading and writing.

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RaPAL 1996: A TURNING POINT?

Margaret Herrington

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network [RaPAL] began in 1985 in order to improve communications between practitioners and researchers in this field and to encourage research which supported democratic practices in literacy work. This short paper describes the changes introduced by Rapal in 1996 and analyses the size, location and interests of current membership. A brief comparison is made with the early years and the priorities which emerged during the first AGM are identified.

Since its inception, RaPAL has been a voluntary network, organised by a loosely defined collective, including two office holders and an editorial group, which has produced three bulletins each year, a number of occasional publications and several conferences/events. Though small and informal, it has usefully explored the crucial interface between research and practice and has regularly raised questions both about literacies in their political and social contexts and about Adult Basic Education policy and practice. It has been one of the very few 'places' where aspects of the oral culture of adult literacy work in the UK could be 'captured'; and where key values underpinning critical literacy could reliably be found.

However, in 1995 there was growing recognition that the organisational structure could not sustain the increasing volume of work and that the informal means of access by the membership into the working group was not sufficient to generate a flow of workers. A decision was therefore taken to hold an AGM at which new structures and new office holders could be adopted; and at which the membership could identify priorities for 1996/7. As preparations got underway it also seemed useful to summarise existing membership data so that we could see more clearly how many and who we were and the professional interests we currently pursued. This AGM took place in June 1996 at the Lifelong Literacies Conference.

The size of the network

As for the size of the network, the Rapal membership data for 1995/6 [up to April 14th] revealed 238 paid up members, including 204 from the UK and 34 from overseas, with a contact list of 345. This was the highest recorded membership. Though records have been kept for the last ten years, they have not provided consistent information throughout and so it is difficult to compare all the features accurately. In general however, the impression is that since the first set of invitations were sent out early in 1985, and the take-off in membership between September and December 1986, the numbers have been somewhere between one and two hundred. At the time of writing in July 1996, the full annual figure for 1995/6 is 258.

Within these overall figures the relative incidence of individual/institutional/student membership, up to April 1996, shows almost double the number of individuals to institutions [127:67] with only ten student members. However, the impression from recent applications is that there is a shift towards institutional membership and more of a fifty-fifty split. The overseas membership already shows such proportions. The implications of this apparent shift in the UK for RaPAL are both financial and professional: institutional members make a greater contribution to the budget and potentially facilitate a wide

dissemination among practitioners and policy makers within their organisations. The isolation which some individual workers feel could be alleviated by this.

The kind of institutions which subscribe show a preponderance of AE, ABE and FE Colleges and Centres: 47 out of the 67 in the UK, and so RaPAL has strength on the ground in ABE. At first glance, higher education institutions seem woefully underrepresented with seven members [cf the Australian context, described in recent RaPAL Bulletins, eds 26 and 31] but this gives a misleading impression of higher education interest in RaPAL: many individual members work in and around higher education. Nevertheless, the institutional membership is low and this may stem from the broader structural problem within the UK, of the universities not being widely involved in the advanced training of adult literacy staff [for exceptions see the RaPAL Bulletin ed 31]. In contrast universities account for almost half of the overseas institutional membership. The interesting question deriving from the UK profile concerns the likely pattern of research which may develop within the network. Given the increasing workloads for ABE practitioners, opportunities for building action research expertise within job descriptions may be squeezed. It seems all the more important for HE institutions to provide post-graduate research routes.

The spread of membership

The geographical spread of the membership shows an overseas group of 34, concentrated in Australia and Canada but with some representation from New Zealand, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Eire, FRG, Denmark, Holland, Slovenia, Japan and the USA. The extent of overseas interest in RaPAL is not fully represented by these figures; there is a steady stream of enquiries about back issues of the bulletin.

The UK membership shows representation in all countries [Scotland 21, Northern Ireland 9 and Wales 7] and areas [South West 32, Midlands 36, North East 27] with the exception of East Anglia [two members only]. There are, however, major concentrations in the North West [62] and London & the South East [79]. This overall spread reinforces the need to stage meetings and events throughout the UK.

Members interests

When RaPAL members join they are asked to indicate their particular interests and when this data for 1995/66 is compared with that of 1986/7, the impression is of an apparent shift from the urgent and often radical thrust of the early years. The current data shows ESOL and ABE as the main areas of work with numeracy being cited on only 9 occasions. The contexts in which members express interest are : prisons, the workplace, rural areas, community based work, FE Colleges, HE institutions, the Family and Open Learning Centres. The groups noted are literacy with deaf students, women, young people, adults with Splds [dyslexia] and those with other special needs. Family Literacy and SPLDS are most frequently cited and FE Colleges and HE institutions are clearly declared as contexts for literacy education.

Some of these interests have been sustained since 1986: student writing within ABE provision, management issues and training all continue to be cited as important interests. Others have grown in significance. The membership secretary of the time, the legendary Mandy MacMahon noted for example: "The influence of family on literacy education", and "I don't know if working with parents is an emerging trend or part of community education

mother and toddler work overlapping with ABE". This has a prophetic ring in the light of the huge current interest in family literacy. And there is now far more interest in IT

Most notable of all, however, was the range of issues declared in 1986/7 and missing from current data. These included: the labelling, debate about literacy, basic skills or adult basic education; the nature of learning-approaches, alternatives, learning styles and incidental learning; student involvement in research; research into the history of literacy and into reading strategies; the political and social context of literacy, literacy and social change; structures and styles of provision and relative drop out; and methods of teaching. The sheer vitality of the time emerges from the complete list, as the passion to establish well managed provision was accompanied by fundamental questions about how illiteracy should be viewed, described and responded to, both politically and andragogically. The impression from current data is of greater concern with more instrumental matters to do with service delivery. However, this must be treated with some caution. The data represents only one third of the membership in the 1995/6 and over a half in 1986/7; and in the light of the ideas expressed by those attending this conference, it would appear that the willingness of RaPAL members to raise difficult and challenging questions and to think 'critically' about 'literacy myths' and practices continues and that the early impression may be somewhat misleading

Future priorities

This conference provided an opportunity for RaPAL members to identify future priorities Participants recommended that new office holders should:

- increase the size, public profile and internal effectiveness of the network [publicity drive, membership lists, regional networking, local events]
- connect more publicly with other networks
- [National Literacy Trust, British Association for Literacy in Development, Adults Learning Maths]
- clarify and make more visible the critical perspectives on literacies so that the an alternative voice about literacy can be heard within policy debates

1996/7 should, therefore, be an important turning point for RaPAL both in terms of organisational restructuring and in the connecting of that structure with the energies of the growing membership. This work should enable us to critically re-evaluate the functions and funding of this network in the light of the current professional and policy context

JULY 1996

The conference

LIFELONG LITERACIES CONFERENCE: CONCEPTION TO BIRTH

Ann Finlay

I'm not quite sure of the exact date of conception although I can say who the parents were, Gatehouse Books and RaPAL - Research and Practice in Adult Literacy. In keeping with the spirit of both organisations a democratic appeal for anyone who was interested to join in planning the conference was issued in early summer 1995 through RaPAL Bulletin. By responding to this appeal I became a member of the planning group, composed of Stella Fitzpatrick and Tom Woodin from Gatehouse Books, Roz Ivanic from Lancaster University, Jane Mace from Goldsmiths College and myself, Ann Finlay from Sheffield University.

As a newcomer to conference planning I embarked on a steep learning curve, accompanied at times by some anxiety, chiefly about the conference programme, in particular how would we fill the timetable with vibrant, relevant speakers and workshop presenters. However as time went on I realised why the rest of the group, considerably more experienced than myself, had not shared this apprehension. At the first planning meeting we thought of having four or five conference strands on writing, the basic skills curriculum, family literacy and assessment in ABE. My own concern was to see research as well as practice included in the strands, as adult reading and writing is a comparatively neglected area when compared to the amount of attention paid by researchers to child based literacy. RaPAL, by definition aims to bridge the gap between research and practice and I felt the conference programme should reflect that concern.

In the weeks following the first meeting Tom and Stella were busy composing and disseminating the call for papers through various outlets. Meanwhile we had taken the overall planning a stage further by fixing on five definite conference strands, family literacy, student writing, multi-lingualism, vocational/workplace literacy and politics of literacy. I think the most exciting part of the whole planning process was sorting through the numerous responses we received from the call for papers and seeing how well the responses fell into the same

groupings we had planned as conference strands. The strands provided us with the necessary structure for decision making, satisfied the diverse interests of the planning group and showed me how important it was to spend time working out structures early on in the planning process. In retrospect the richness and diversity of the workshop offers made my earlier anxiety over recruiting workshop presenters seem naive. The size and quality of the response was also the cause of our only painful task, undertaken by Jane and me - turning down perfectly good proposals because of our finite programme.

As well as opening and closing plenary sessions Roz suggested syndicate groups and undertook to carry out the necessary organisation. These proved a great success and were one of the many facets of the conference which it is impossible to capture in any conference proceedings, focused as they are on workshop papers and plenary sessions.

Throughout the planning it was difficult for me to imagine what the conference would be like in reality and it was only when we held our last meeting on the conference site that the final details were ironed out. There were a myriad practical items to be considered from who would introduce speakers to who would supply the blu-tack. The event itself was a real joy, to see and hear such varied speakers, to come away with my head full of new ideas, and to meet like minded colleagues. In addition, as part of the planning team I had had the privilege of working with and learning from experienced professionals and observing first hand the creative endeavours lying behind a successful conference.

Lifelong literacies conference Friday 31 May, 1996

10am-11am	Arrivals, registration and coffee, Room 0.1, Behrens Building				
11am-12noon	**Opening plenary: Sue Gardener. "Basic education in the post-industrial world: jobs, gender and citizenship."** Room 0.1, Behrens Building				
12-1pm	Lunch				
1.15pm-2.15pm	**Syndicate groups**				
	Family literacy Room 1.1	**Student publishing Room 0.3**	**Multi-Lingual literacies Room 1.6**	**Vocational literacies Room 1.7**	**Politics of literacy Room 1.9**
Workshops 2.15pm-3.30pm	Home and school literacy practices, Charmian Kenner Room1.1	Reflecting on the significance of student publishing, Jane Mace Room 0.3	Child and adult literacies within multi-lingual families, Nan Jackson and Ahasan Khan Room 1.6	A pragmatic approach to vocational literacy Audrey Stewart Room 1.7	Whose literacy is it anyway?, Jan Thompson Room 1.9
3.30-4pm	Tea and coffee				
4pm-5.30pm	**RaPAL AGM - everyone welcome.** Room 0.1, Behrens Building				
6pm-7pm	Buffet dinner, refectory				
Workshops 7.30pm-8.45pm	Family literacy in West Glamorgan, Sandra Morton and The Families and Schools Together Project (FAST) Anne Bentley and Margaret Cook Room1.1	Making sense of experience, the role of narrative, Julia Clark Room 0.3	Refugees and lifelong learning, Helen Sunderland Room 1.6	Return to study, Jo Colley Room 1.7	Teach the mother to reac the child? Jacqui Armour Room 1.9

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Lifelong literacies conference Saturday June 1st, 1996

Bookstalls will be held throughout the day. Bags can be left in Room 0.4

9.15am-10.15am	**Plenary: David Barton and Mary Hamilton. "Putting the new literacy studies into practice."** Room 0.0, Behrens Building				
	Family literacy Room 1.1	Student publishing Room 0.3	Multi-Lingual literacies Room 1.6	Vocational literacies Room 1.7	Politics of literacy Room 1.9
Workshops 10.15am-11.30am	Continuities and discontinuities: child and adult literacies, Nigel Hall Room 1.1	Student publishing and ESOL Qaisra Ahmad and Patricia Duffin Room 0.3	Understanding multilingual literacies using collaborative photograhpy Kathryn Jones Room 1.6	Adult literacy in vocational education in colleges of F.E., Pat Kirby and Anne Corrie Room 1.7	Autonomous learning a change, Wendy Moss and Christine O'Mahony Room 1.9
11.30-12noon	Tea and coffee and bookstalls				
Workshops 12-1.15pm	Understanding nursery education: how does this course for parents and carers fit into literacy and basic education provision? Fou Fou Savitsky Room 1.1	Poetry writing and ABE Lucy Jencks, Abdul Rahman Isaaka, and Anju Begum Room 0.3	Layers of literacy in second languages & cultures, Martin Cortazzi and Lixian Jin Room 1.6	Politics of workplace literacy, Fiona Frank and Chris Holland Room 1.7	Listening and teaching basic education, Alison Noel Room 1.9
1pm-2.45pm	Lunch break and bookstalls				
2.45pm-3.45	**Syndicate groups**				
3.45pm-4.15pm	Break, bookstalls				
4.15pm-5.30pm	**Closing plenary: Achievements, current position and futures.** Room 0.0, Behrens Building				

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List of participants

Said Abou Sehly	Egypt
Anne Adams	Riverside Centre, Isle of Wight
Qaisra Ahmad	Hulme Adult Education Centre
Mrs Shamina Ahmed	Rochdale
Yasmin Alam	Leeds
Hadeel Alhoussini	Egypt
Novvy Allan	South Gloucester Community Education
Musseret Anwar	South Norwood Adult Education Centre
Jacqui Armour	London
David Barton	Lancaster University
L Beer	Travellers Training Project, Bosworth College
Jan Bell	Fast Lane, Huddersfield
Carol Bennett	Preston
Ann Bentley	The Resource Centre, Bootle
Mr Arvind Bhatt	Leicester
Frances Brett	Birmingham
Jenny Brown	Bath
Richard Burke	Grovelands, Kent
Hilary Chamberlain	Lincoln
Julia Clarke	Southampton University
Genevieve Clarke	Aldershot
Jo Colley	New College Durham
Julie Collins	Eburne Adult Literacy, Coventry, Group
Lesley Conran	
Mrs Margaret Cook	Education Department, Bootle
Gill Cooper	Salford College
Ann Corrie	MANCAT
Martin Cortazzi	University of Leicester
Susan Craggs	Wirral
Nancy Dewdney	Cambridgeshire
Jill Dimond	East End House
Veronica Doyle	Northampton

Peter Dunn	**Art of Change**
Abeer Hany El-Ganainy	Egypt
Mokhtar Elgindy	Egypt
Sherine Elsayed	Egypt
Jenny Espirer	Highfield Centre, Aldershot
Ann Evelrigh	Education 2000, Leeds
Helen Farley	Telford College of Arts and Technology
Ann Finlay	Nottingham
Stella Fitzpatrick	Gatehouse
Fiona Frank	Lancaster University
Margaret Garai	Reading
Sue Gardner	Urban Learning Foundation
Iris George	Belfast
John Glynn	Peckett Well College
Peter Goode	Peckett Well College
Elaine Green	Kensington and Chelsea College
Nigel Hall	Manchester Metropolitan University
Mary Hamilton	Lancaster University
Judith Harrison	Lancaster
Tricia Hartley	Nelson and Colne College
Assim Abdul Hassan	Sheffield
Chris Hayes	Manchester Adult Education Services
Ann-Marie Heenan	Coventry
Ms Margaret Herrington	Leicester
Barbara Hodgson	Wigan
Nel Hofmeester	Amsterdam
Chris Holland	Lancaster University
Julie Holton	Riverside Centre
Gaye Houghton	Lancashire
Kim Howard	Bristol
Nora Hughes	Hackney Community College
Roz Ivanic	Lancaster University
Joanna Jackson	Stroud College of Further Education
Nan Jackson	Parnership Education Project, Rochdale
Mrs Sarah Jackson	Croydon
Patricia Jackson	Gillingham Adult Education Centre
Lixian Jin	De Montfort University

Eleri Jones	Gwynnedd
Kathryn Jones	Lancaster University
Mrs Sandra Kemp	Lincolnshire
Charmian Kenner	London
Hugo Kerr	Clwyd
Ahasan Khan	Parnership Education Project
Pat Kirby	MANCAT
Tincke Krol	Amsterdam
Sandra Lally	Kent
Antoinette Last	Kent
Michaela Lawler	Deptford Litetacy Centre
Gillian Lloyd	Twyford House Centre, Bristol
Marie Lowther	Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale
Ann-Marie Lydon	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Jane Mace	Goldsmiths College
Lyn Mackenzie	Stourbridge
Catherine Macrae	Southbridge Resource Centre
Alison Malony	Beneast Training, Blackpool
Hilary Marshall	Bristol
Marilyn Martin-Jones	Lancaster University
Mrs Tara McArthur	London
Juliet McCaffery	Brighton
Doreen McCarthy	Gateshead
Sandra Morton	Community Education, Swansea
Wendy Moss	London
Alber Mouriss	Egypt
Anne Nederkoorn	Amsterdam
V Nelson	Travellers Training Project
M Neville	Aldershot
Alison Noel	ABE Unit, Oxford
Noreen Nolan	Brent Adult Learners Centre
Chris O'Mahony	London
Josie Pearse	Kensington and Chelsea College
Sandra Pegum	Wirral
Carolyn Phillips	Hopwood Hall College
Kathy Pitt	Lancaster University
Angela Porter	Blackpool and the Fylde College

Abby Prince	Salford Education
Abdul Rahman Isaaka	Tower Hamlets College
Mrs Bhauna Rai	Coventry
Linda Ramsay	Connect - Family Literacy, Edinburgh
Merce Redon	Barcelona
Gary Roberts	Connect - Family Literacy, Edinburgh
Mrs Najima Saeed	Leicestershire
Fou Fou Savitsky	The London Language and Literacy Unit
Mrs Gwynneth Shiers	Dyfed
Marigold Slater	West Cheshire College
Lorna Smith	Leeds
Joan Stableford	Preston College
Audrey Stewart	Loughborough College
Helen Sunderland	London Language and Literacy Unit
Jo Swindells	Kensington and Chelsea College
Carol Taylor	Sheffield
Alison Thompson	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Jan Thompson	London
Alison Tomlin	London
Pepa Valdelvira	Barcelona
Beverley Ward	The Word Place, Sheffield
Jenny Webb	Aldershot
Pearl Whiter	West Midlands
Sheila Williamson	Platform Adult Learning Centre, Edinburgh
HDK Wilson	Calderdale College
Anita Wilson	Lancaster University
Tom Woodin	Gatehouse

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Living, lifelong and still alive: a note on evaluation

Jane Mace

'Lifelong Literacies' was not one conference, but a hundred and twenty. Of course, it was one programme, in one place, with one title. But each of the participants will have had differing experiences (after all, we had a total of 20 workshops to choose between in four timetabled workshop sessions) and different perspectives on the apparently common moments of plenary sessions and the RaPAL annual general meeting itself.

For those of us who planned it, the event felt, as Ann 's account suggests, 'a joy' - despite (or even because of) the uncertainties that preceded it. As a member of the planning group that organised the 'Living Literacies' conference in London in April 1995, I was in a position to compare a little. 67 people attended the first; 120, the second. At both, the most common feeling expressed was the desire for reviving energy and a sense of common values: 'to meet kindred spirits', 'to find out about theoretical aspects of literacy', 'to gain ideas for good practice' and 'to regain some sense of community of purpose and politics in our work'.

Both conferences aimed to provide a forum for the changing experience of people who teach, learn and research what is variously called 'adult literacy', 'basic skills' and 'literacy and language in everyday life'. Both took place in a period when gatherings in which such experience and ideas about them could be reflected on critically, in the UK, feel all too rare. As one participant at the 1996 conference put it, the other pressures of work make this reflection even more precious, coming as she did with the hope that she could

> 'remind myself of why I do what I do, and regain some of my enthusiasm and commitment (- after a year of FEFC inspection in which life has been dominated by paperwork, statistics, units, evidence, etc. - to the detriment of real work with real learners)'

Both events were organised by an ad hoc group of people wanting to do our best to spread the net as widely as possible, but who were doing it against the same financial and funding constraints as the colleagues we were inviting.

So both conferences felt an achievement in their own right. At each, evaluation sheets were dutifully completed by some of the participants; and we will use an analysis of them for planning the next. Here, though, is a brief note on the business of evaluating evaluations.

Of the 67 people at the 1995 conference, 26 completed evaluation sheets. (aprox. 40%)
Of these, 20 out of 26 said their hopes in coming to the conference had been 'largely met'.
Of the 120 who attended this year's, 65 completed. (approx. 50%)
Of these, 50 out of 65 rated the achievement of their hopes as 4 or 5 (almost or entirely fulfilled).

What can we learn from this?
There is a suspicion that only satisfied customers fill in evaluation forms.
(After all, half or more of participants did not complete them. It seems that not even the added incentive of a surprise prize for the lucky number form to be drawn just before the last

conference session - an idea imported from an Australian literacy conference - was enough to persuade more than these to do so.)
So all we can say honestly say is this: that most of the people who filled in evaluation forms rated the experience of the conferences as a whole as satisfying. For now, that seems good enough!

Finally, a special feature of the 'Lifelong Literacies' conference programme was the inclusion of the first public and formal annual general meeting of the national network of RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy: originally established in 1984 at another conference, in Lancaster). A new collective of people are now taking forward the work of consolidating and extending this important network: for addresses, see below. RaPAL intend to hold next year's conference in June 1997 in London.

Chair: Mary Hamilton, Dept of Educational Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL tel: 01524-592679
Secretary: Gaye Houghton, 124 Town Lane, Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley PR6 8AG tel: 01257-275923
Membership Secretary: Margaret Herrington, 90 Holmfield Road, Leicester LE2 1SB tel: 01162-737572
Treasurer: Wendy Moss, City Lit Training Unit, Stukeley Street, London WC2 2B 5LJ tel: 0181-318-5583
Publicity/events: Jo Swindells, Open Project, Kensington & Chelsea College, Warrington Rd, London W10 8QQ tel: 0181-964-9252

This report comprises a unique collection of papers from the 1996 Lifelong Literacies Conference held in Manchester. They reflect the current thinking and practice going on in adult literacy, effectively bridging the gaps between theory and practice. Each one has been worked on and edited for publication. Gatehouse is pleased to be publishing this conference report.

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